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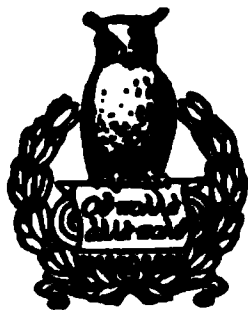




Grasmere, in the English Lake Country  
From a photograph

**A FIRST BOOK**  
**IN**  
**ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**BY**  
**HENRY S. PANCOAST**  
**AND**  
**PERCY VAN DYKE SHELLY**

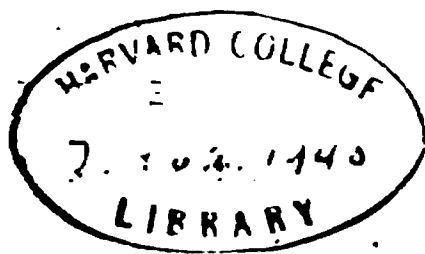


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## PREFACE

IN this shorter book I have not hesitated to make what use I could of my earlier *Introduction to English Literature*, but I have found that comparatively little of it was suited to my present purpose. The general plan, and chief chronological divisions have been retained, but apart from this the present book is largely new, written in a simple style and designed to meet a different need. There is less literary criticism and relatively more biography, while many authors and books mentioned in the larger work are here barely alluded to or passed over altogether. As far as possible the mere enumeration of authors and titles has been avoided, and the student has been led to concentrate his attention upon a comparatively small number of authors of the first importance.

Like its predecessor this book aims to treat the history of English literature in its broad relations to the social, religious, and political history of England, and of Europe; to make the student realize that literature is a vital and significant part of a nation's history, and one of the most intimate revelations of the national life and aspiration. It tries to show him that the literary history of England is not the record of a meaningless and fortuitous succession of men and events, but rather a continuous and fascinating story, in which each age is largely the product of those that have gone before it, and in which the present is in a real and apparent way the daughter of the past.

A book of this kind should be clear, brief, and accurate, but even this is not enough. It should aim above all to

make the great books a part of the student's mental life, and the great authors living men in the substantial world of his imagination. Much will have been accomplished if such strong, complex, or loveable personalities as Johnson or Bunyan, Swift or Defoe, Goldsmith, Shelley, or Browning, have been made as real and definite as the personages of some favorite story, and if the student has been given a desire to know more of them and of their works. It is not an easy thing to do this, especially within such narrow limits, and the scanty suggestions of the book need to be supplemented by the skill and sympathy of the teacher, but I can honestly say that the great English writers are very real and human to me, and that I have tried to make them so to others.

I have written here as if I were alone responsible for the book, but this is very far from being the case. It is a pleasure, as well as an act of bare justice, to acknowledge my great indebtedness to my friend Mr. Percy V. D. Shelly, who has worked side by side with me. Indeed we have been so closely and so happily associated, so entirely in sympathy in working for a common end, that we have taken little heed of nice distinctions of mine or thine. If there were any object in doing so, it would not be easy to estimate exactly our respective contributions, but I may say truly that my colleague has faithfully followed, from first to last, the Wordsworthian injunction,

"Give all thou can's't, high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely calculated less and more."

H. S. P.

CHESTNUT HILL, PA.

September 6, 1910.

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# A GENERAL OUTLINE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

## I. THE PERIOD OF PREPARATION

### 1. From the Beginning to the Norman Conquest, — to 1066.

#### A. CONTINENTAL AND PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA.

##### 1. *Widsith*.

English begin to settle in Britain, 449.

Landing of St. Augustine and the Introduction of Christianity, 597.

#### B. CAEDMON TO ALFRED (670–871)

##### 1. Literature in Wessex.

Aldhelm, poet and scholar, 670?–709.

##### 2. Literature in Northumbria.

a. *Beowulf*.

b. Caedmon's paraphrase of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, etc.

c. Cynewulf; religious poems.

d. Bede, scholar and historian, writes in Latin the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

#### C. ALFRED TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST (871–1066).

Invasions of the Danes, 787–878.

Accession of Alfred the Great, 871.

Peace of Chippenham, 878.

##### 1. Revival of Prose under Alfred, 880.

a. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

b. Alfred's Translations from Latin into Old English, or Anglo-Saxon Prose.

##### 2. From Death of Alfred to Norman Conquest.

Ælfric — about 950?–1016?

### 2. Norman Conquest to the Death of Chaucer (1066–1400).

William the Conqueror wins the Battle of Hastings, 1066.

## A GENERAL OUTLINE OF

Loss of Normandy by King John of England, 1204.  
Hundred Years' War between England and France,  
1338–1453.

Literature during this period was written in Latin,  
French, and English.

### A. LATIN.

1. Florence of Worcester and William of Malmesbury, early Latin chroniclers (first half of XII century).
2. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, in Latin, introduces Celtic legend into Norman and English literature (1147).
3. Matthew Paris, a later Latin Chronicler, died 1259.

### B. FRENCH.

Romances.

- a. *Song of Roland*.
- b. Arthurian Romances.

### C. ENGLISH.

1. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* continued to 1154.
2. English begins to gain ground in the 13th century.
  - a. Layamon's *Brut* about (1205).
  - b. French romances appear in English (13th and 14th centuries).
  - c. English Songs.
  - d. Miracle Plays.
3. Triumph of English in the 14th century.
  - a. Wyclif (about 1324–1384).
  - b. Gower (1330–1408).
  - c. Langland (about 1332–1400).
  - d. Chaucer (about 1340–1400).

## II. PERIOD OF THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND, 1400–1600.

### 1. The Revival of Learning.

Foreign and Civil Wars, 1400–1485.

During this period the Renaissance slowly enters England; and at its close, with the accession of Henry VII (1485) and the end of the Wars of the Roses, its progress becomes more rapid.

## A. RENAISSANCE IN EDUCATION.

Colleges founded; introduction of Printing, 1477;  
Greek taught at Oxford (Grocyn, 1491).

## B. RENAISSANCE IN LITERATURE.

### 1. Early Writers.

a. Wyatt and Surrey introduced respectively the sonnet and blank verse, in poems published in *Tottel's Miscellany*, 1557.

b. Gascoigne and Sackville.

### 2. Culmination of the Renaissance, from Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, 1579, to death of Shakespeare, 1616.

a. Spenser, descriptive and narrative poet, 1552–1599.

b. Marlowe and Shakespeare, dramatists.

Other dramatists: Kyd, Peele, Greene, Middleton, Dekker, Chapman, Ben Jonson, etc.

c. Sidney, poet and prose writer, 1554–1586.

d. Hooker, theologian and prose writer, 1553–1600.

e. Bacon, philosopher and essayist, 1561–1626.

f. Raleigh's *History of the World*, 1614.

## 2. The Decline of the Renaissance and the Expression of the Reformation in Literature, from the death of Shakespeare, 1616, to the Restoration, 1660.

### A. LATER ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE.

1. Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher, dramatists.

2. The Spenserian School, poets following the manner of Spenser.

3. Cavalier Lyrists, Herrick, Lovelace, Suckling, etc.

### B. RELIGIOUS POETS.

1. John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, — Church of England.

2. John Milton, Puritan, 1608–1674.

### C. PROSE WRITERS.

1. Sir Thomas Browne, Isaak Walton, Richard Burton, Jeremy Taylor, John Milton.

2. John Bunyan, 1628–1688, published *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678.

Civil War and Protectorate, 1642–1660.

III. THE PERIOD OF THE FRENCH INFLUENCE,  
1660-1750

## 1. The England of the Restoration, or The Age of Dryden, 1660-1700.

a. John Dryden, 1631-1700, satirist and writer of comedies.

b. Other Dramatists, Farquhar, Wycherley, Congreve, etc., etc.

1688, Revolution, which results in placing William and Mary on the throne, and shows the increasing power of Parliament.

c. Milton writes *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, 1667-1671.

d. John Bunyan publishes *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678.

e. Jeremy Collier writes *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage*, 1698, and in part purifies the drama.

## 2. The Age of Pope, 1700-1750.

## A. POETRY.

Alexander Pope, 1688-1744; satire, criticism, and philosophy in verse.

## B. PROSE.

a. Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, political writers and pamphleteers. They contribute to the development of fiction.

b. Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, Periodical Essayists, who in the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, etc. contribute to the development of the novel.

c. Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, novelists.

## 3. The Age of Johnson. (Later followers of Dryden and Pope.)

a. Dr. Samuel Johnson, moralist, critic, lexicographer, and literary dictator of his day.

b. Associated with Johnson were: Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, David Garrick (actor), Sir Joshua Reynolds (painter).

IV. THE MODERN ENGLISH PERIOD, ABOUT 1725–1909

I. The Beginning of Modern Literature.

A. THE NEW SYMPATHY WITH NATURE.

1. Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, 1725.
2. James Thomson's *Seasons*, 1730.
3. Collins and Gray.
4. Oliver Goldsmith's *The Traveller*, 1764, *Deserted Village*, 1770, etc.
5. The Poems of William Cowper, 1731–1800.
6. The Songs and Poems of Robert Burns, 1759–1796.
7. The poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge, especially *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798.

B. THE NEW SYMPATHY WITH MAN. The Rise of Modern Democracy, as seen in the works of Thomson, Goldsmith, Cowper, Gray, Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

C. THE NEW INTEREST IN THE ROMANTIC PAST.

1. Dodsley's *Old Plays*, 1774. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1764.
2. Poems of Thomas Chatterton, 1752–1770.
3. David Garrick's performances of Shakespeare's plays in London, 1741–1776.
4. Sir Walter Scott, 1771–1832.
  - a. Poems, about 1805–1832.
  - b. Waverley Novels, 1814–1831.

D. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

(Fall of the Bastille, 1789.)

1. Burns, Wordsworth and Coleridge sympathize with the Revolution.
2. Edmund Burke, opposes the Revolution.
3. Later Poets of the Revolution.
  - a. Byron, 1788–1824.
  - b. Shelley, 1792–1822.

E. JOHN KEATS, 1795–1821, the poet of Beauty, interested especially in classic Greek and romantic Medieval themes.

F. ESSAYISTS:

1. Charles Lamb, 1775–1834, familiar essayist and critic.
2. Other essayists, Thomas De Quincey, Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, etc.

**2. The Victorian Era (about 1832-1901).**

Reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901.

Passing of the First Reform Bill, 1832, an important step in the advance of democracy.

Publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, 1859, the greatest single contribution to modern science.

**A. PROSE WRITERS (historians, essayists, etc.).**

1. Macaulay, 1800-1859, popular historian and critic.
2. Thomas Carlyle, 1795-1881, critic, idealist, and prophet to his age.
3. John Ruskin, 1819-1900, art critic, social reformer, prophet.
4. Cardinal Newman, 1801-1890, theologian, educator, critic.
5. Matthew Arnold, 1822-1888, poet and literary and theological critic.
6. Other prose writers: James A. Froude, E. A. Freeman, J. R. Green (historians); Frederick Harrison, Leslie Stephen, Walter Pater, J. A. Symonds (critics and essayists).

**B. NOVELISTS.**

1. Charles Dickens, 1812-1870.
2. William Makepeace Thackeray, 1811-1863.
3. George Eliot, 1819-1880.
4. George Meredith, 1828-1909.
5. Thomas Hardy, born 1840.
6. Other novelists and story-writers: Charles Reade; Anthony Trollope; Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë; Charles Kingsley; Wilkie Collins; R. L. Stevenson; Rudyard Kipling, etc.

**C. POETS.**

1. Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892, poet of democracy, science, and faith.
2. Robert Browning, 1812-1889, poet of faith.
3. Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough, poets of doubt.
4. Rise of Pre-Raphaelite School of Poetry and Painting,  
°48. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William  
rominent poets in this school.

5. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837–1909.
6. Other poets of the period: Coventry Patmore, James Thomson, George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, Alfred Austin, Austin Dobson, William Watson, Rudyard Kipling, etc.





# ENGLISH LITERATURE

## I. PERIOD OF PREPARATION

### CHAPTER I

#### FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

##### THE EARLY ENGLISH PEOPLE

ENGLAND was not always the land of the English, although it is now nearly fifteen hundred years since they first settled in the island then known as Britain. If you will look at a map of Europe in the days when the Romans were the masters of the civilized world, you will see that beyond the northern borders of the Roman Empire there stretched a vast region, which the Romans called Germania, or the land of the Germans. This region was then a wilderness of forest and morass. For a long time the Romans knew but little about it, for it was almost beyond the farthest limits of civilization. It was inhabited by various fierce, half-barbarous, German tribes, whose stubborn courage grew to be a menace to the Empire. Upon the northwestern edge of this forbidding wilderness, on the borders of the North Sea, just north of what is now Holland, three German tribes, the Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons, had made their home. These three tribes, living side by side, came of the same stock; spoke the same language, and had the same customs and beliefs, though each tribe

held its own lands, and lived in some respects as a separate community. At a later time, after their settlement in England, a member of any one of these three tribes, whether he were Jute, Angle, or Saxon, came to be known by the general name of Englishman.

These English were a hardy, vigorous race; deep-chested, big-limbed men, with ruddy faces, straw-colored hair, and blue or gray eyes. They were fishermen, farmers, and sailors; above all they were daring and savage fighters by land and by sea. Living on a bleak, cheerless coast, with a dense wilderness of forest on the one hand, and the dull-hued, stormy waters of the North Sea stretching away upon the other, the very necessities of their situation demanded strength, courage, and endurance. On the western side the land sloped in meadow, marsh, or sandy flats to the sea, and fierce storms drove down upon the sunken coasts, then unprotected by dyke or sea-wall, flooding the shoals and winding inlets so that the waters often spread far inland. There were many things in this early home of the English to encourage somber and melancholy thoughts. Chilling and dismal fogs settled down upon it, and the depths of its forests, where at best the sunshine hardly penetrated, were often soaked and dripping from the frequent rains. In such a world there was little room for the weakling or the coward; if a man were to live at all he must live bravely and masterfully, fighting for his place.

**Early English Life and Character.** — When we remember that these Early English were a long way from the civilization of the Roman world, in the savage wilderness of the north, we need not be surprised to find that they were in many ways rough, coarse, and cruel. They were strong men, untaught and undisciplined; they

knew nothing of Christianity with its teachings of love and forgiveness, and their faults were those natural to their situation and their time. Life was full of hate and violence: murderers were not tried and punished by the government, or the State. If a man was killed, it became the duty of his relatives — that is, the men of his family or clan — to avenge his death. So it happened that mortal quarrels, or blood-feuds, often existed between one clan and another. And not only did the English fight among themselves, they were what we should call pirates. They thought it a glorious and a noble thing to take to their ships, swoop down on some neighboring coast settlement, and then, having butchered the inhabitants, and given the village to the flames, to sail away in triumph, laden with plunder. We are told that sometimes, despising danger, they would land in a storm, so that, in the midst of the darkness and confusion of the tempest, their approach could not be seen so easily, and their victims be thus caught unprepared. The dwellers in the coast towns and villages far to the southward, and the people on the eastern shores of Britain, grew to fear the sudden attacks of these pitiless marauders. They dreaded the appearance of these pirate ships, as the early settlers in America dreaded an Indian raid. One of the petitions of an early prayer, or litany, is said to have been: "Lord, deliver us from the fury of the Jutes."

Terrible abroad, at home these English were not free from the coarseness and brutality natural to a physically powerful and imperfectly civilized race. They loved to gather about the long table in the great feast hall; eating greedily, with the eager hunger of the savage, and draining cup after cup of mead, — an intoxicating drink sweetened with honey. A fire burned in the

center, and, as there were no chimneys, the smoke had to find its way out, as best it could, through openings in the roof. The host sat about half-way down the rude table, raised a little higher than the others; the men boasted of their brave deeds, and told stories of their battles, and of dangers faced and escaped on sea and land. Perhaps, as it grew late, the company became more boisterous and quarrelsome, for the wild passions of these men were easily aroused. Outside were the woods, stretching away black and solitary; the dismal wastes of marsh and sand, and the sea. All was rude and wild, with the harshness and simplicity of the primitive world.

**The English Virtues.** — But there was another side to the English character which we are sometimes too apt to slight or to forget. It is not remarkable that these Early English should have been coarse or violent, for that is only what we should expect from such a people in such surroundings; the truly wonderful and important fact is, that with all their roughness they possessed splendid virtues, and a wonderful depth and nobility of soul. They were not only brave, they were *loyal* and *grateful*. Each chief, or lord, had his band of followers, men who had eaten and drunk at his table, ready and glad to be faithful to death, and to give their own lives for their leader in the time of need. In an old English poem, one of these followers, or *thegns*, seeing Beowulf, his leader, in mortal peril, cries out:

“Well do I mind when we drank mead in the hall, how we promised our lord who gave us these rings, that we would repay him his war-gifts, helmets, and hard swords, if ever the need should arise. Us he picked from the host for this venture, and heartened with hope of glory; he gave us these gifts because he thought us good fighters, gallant wearers of helmets; though all the while our lord meant

to do this deed alone and unaided, shepherd of his people, who of all men is foremost in glorious deeds of daring. Now is the day come that our dear lord needs the strength of good spearmen. Up! let us go to him now, help our hero while the heat sore tires him. As for me, God knows, I had rather that the ruthless flame should wrap my body together with his: 'tis not meet, methinks, for us to bring home our shields, before we have felled the foe, saved the life of the Lord of the Weder-people."

We may call these Early English pirates, but we must remember that they looked upon these raids as honorable warfare, as glorious adventures in which a man might win not merely pleasure but *honor*. This desire for glory was a passion with them, as it was with the knights of the Middle Ages, and honor was dearer to them than life. "Far better death," writes one of their poets, "than to live a life of blame." In the battle of *Maldon*, — fought between the English and the Danes, — man after man rushed willingly forward to lie beside his dead leader, just as afterward, at the battle of *Hastings*, the English nobles fought on until there was a heap of slain about the body of the dead King Harold. Lawless as they may seem to us, they early showed that English instinct for *law*, that English love of *freedom*, which enabled them in later times to build up one of the most truly democratic governments in the world. They had, also, a true, if crude, *chivalry* in their feeling towards women, and while the polished Roman civilization had become vicious through wealth and self-indulgence, the life of the hardy English was sound and comparatively pure. They were *hospitable*, for among the Germans it was thought impious to refuse food and shelter to any one. But more than all, there was at the very heart of the English character a wonderful *depth* and *earnestness*. They were not altogether taken up with fighting or with feasting; life meant something more to them than

the dangers or the pleasures of the passing day. Half-savage as they seem at first, they had deep and solemn thoughts about the hidden meaning of life and death. They felt awe and wonder in the midst of things mysterious and unknown; they, too, knew those

“Blank misgivings of a Creature,  
Moving about in worlds not realised,”

which show an essentially *religious* nature. They tried to put their vague feelings, their scattered impressions of life as they knew it, into words. They made rude songs, or chants, about their battles or the dangers of the sea; about death, which no man can escape; about *fate*, or *destiny*, the unseen power that to them seemed the ruler of all created things. A few passages from their poetry will help us to understand this better. Here, for instance, is a picture of their perils and privations on the sea:

“Little he knows whose lot is happy,  
Who lives at ease in the lap of the earth,  
How sick at heart o’er the icy seas  
Wretched I ranged the winter through,  
Bare of joys and banished from friends;  
Hung with icicles, stung by hail-stones.  
Nought I heard but the hollow boom  
Of wintry waves, or the wild-swan’s whoop,  
For singing I had the solan’s scream,  
For peals of laughter the yelp of the seal,  
The sea-mew’s cry for the mirth of the mead-hall.”

The following is only one among many passages which show us how these English sturdily faced the great fact of death:

“This one shall hunger slay, that one the storm sweep away.  
One shall the spear o’ertake, another the battle break.  
This one in darkness shall drag out his days,

Groping with feeble hand to feel where his foot may stand.  
Another shall mourn his fate, moan o'er his helpless state  
Stricken with palsy in sinews and limbs."

These English, as so many of the greatest poets have done, felt how quickly everything earthly changes or passes away. A poem called *The Wanderer* is full of this feeling. This poem is the lament of an exile. His lord and kinsman is dead: the great feast-hall, where the warriors met in the old days, with song or laughter, is in ruins: his comrades are scattered or slain. The poet, a friendless wanderer, mourns for the things that are past.

"Who wisely hath mused on this wall-stead, and ponders this dark life well,  
In his heart hath often bethought him of slayings many and fell,  
And these be the words he taketh, the thoughts of his heart to tell:  
Where is the horse and the rider? where is the giver of gold?  
Where be the seats at the banquet? where be the hall-joys of old?  
Alas for the burnished cup, for the byrned chief to-day!  
Alas for the strength of the prince! for the time that hath passed away  
Is hid in the shadow of night, as it never had been at all."

As the speaker, journeying in distant lands, looks back on these lost joys, the world seems full of hardship, ruled by *Wyrd*, the goddess of Fate, against whose cruel decrees nothing can stand. At the doom of Fate all passes, until at last even the earth itself shall be ruined and empty.

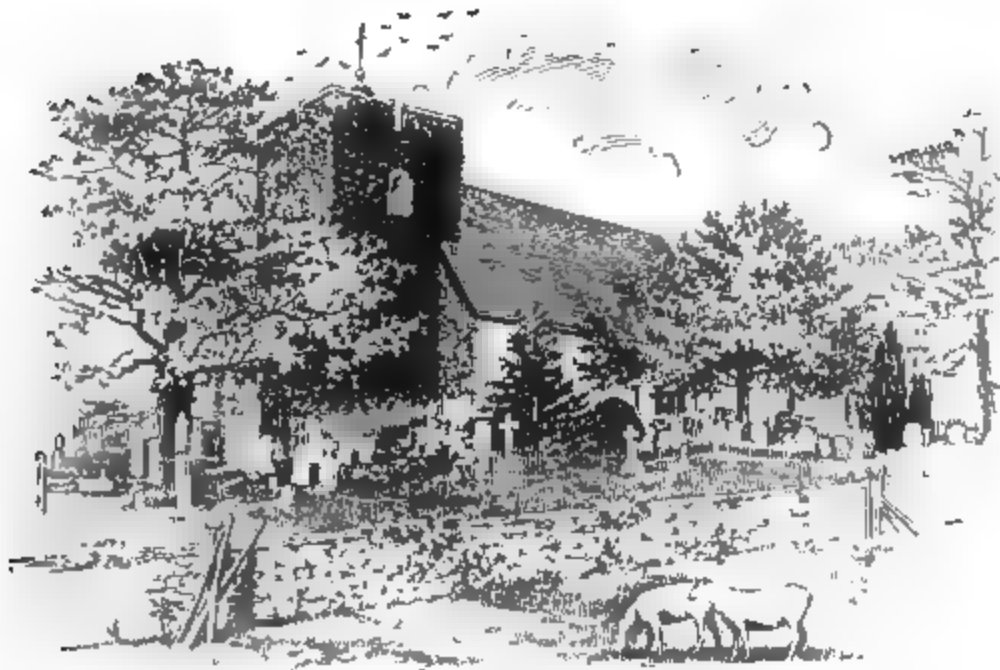
Yet this sense of the shortness of life and its pleasures did not make the English yield to a dull melancholy, nor did it lead them to give themselves up to the careless enjoyment of the hour. It strengthened them in their desire to live bravely, winning the praise due to heroes. "He who has the chance," says Beowulf, "should work mighty deeds before he die: that is for a mighty man the best memorial."



In these passages, as in many others, we can see the force and nobility of the English nature; the earnestness and spirituality that have done so much to make their literature great and lasting. These great qualities were in them from the beginning; and in the centuries to come, when the fierce English nature was sweetened by Christianity and broadened by civilization and a wider outlook, these same thoughts and feelings were expressed by many of the greatest English writers in words that the world cannot easily forget.

**English Settle in Britain.** — For many years the English wasted the coasts of the neighboring island of Britain, landing to burn, and kill, and plunder, and then sailing away. But at last, about the middle of the fifth century, a band of Jutes landed in the southeastern corner of Britain, on an island off the coast of Kent, and settled there. Reinforced by other bands, they fought and overcame the native Britons, and, before long, conquered Kent. The Jutes were followed by the Saxons; the Saxons by the Angles. The Britons defended themselves strenuously, but, as the invading tribes were joined by fresh bands, swarming from their old home on the mainland, after more than a century of hard fighting, the English were masters of the eastern half of the island. For a time the English lived much as they had done in their old home. Their new home, *Engla-land*, or *England*, — the land of the Angles, — as it came to be called, was still a wild, thinly-settled country, overgrown with thick woods, with many dismal, solitary tracts of marsh and fen. There, the life of the English continued to be filled with danger and hardship, for besides their struggles with the Britons the English were often at war among themselves. The English had brought with them their laws and

customs, their superstitions, their legends, and their literature. They still worshiped Thor, Odin, and other heathen gods, after the manner of their fathers. No doubt they sang or chanted the old poems made by their forefathers in the old home across the sea, and, very likely, they made new poems celebrating their victories in the new land. But they were still shut



St. Martin's Church, Canterbury, called  
"The Mother Church of England."

away from the learning and civilization of Europe, no new influences had as yet entered their lives strong enough to make them look at life differently or to turn their thoughts in a new direction.

**Introduction of Christianity.** — But at the close of the sixth century, nearly a hundred and fifty years after the settlement of the Jutes in Britain, a great change took place in the life and belief of the English, which gave a fresh inspiration and a new direction to their

literature. This change was the conversion of the English to Christianity. In 597 ST. AUGUSTINE, a missionary sent directly from Rome, landed with forty monks at the isle of Thanet, the very spot where the Jutish war-ships had landed one hundred and forty-eight years before, and introduced the new religion into the south. Early in the seventh century Christianity was carried north, into Northumbria, the great kingdom of the Angles. But the lasting conversion of the north was due not to the Roman missionaries but the Irish. In 635 an Irish missionary had founded a monastery at Iona, off the western coast of Scotland, whence another missionary came into Northumbria, and became the first great bishop of the north. By the middle of the seventh century (655), while many old heathen beliefs and superstitions remained, Christianity had gained a firm and lasting hold upon the English both south and north.

**Work of Christianity among the English.** — It is not enough for us to know the mere fact that Christianity was thus brought to the English during the sixth and seventh centuries. We must go farther and know something of the real meaning of this great event, and of its influence on the life and literature of the people. It has been said that even while the English were still heathen, they were by nature religious. The world, to them, was full of mysterious, invisible powers, which manifested themselves in the works of nature. They were untaught, but they were not indifferent. On the contrary, for generations, those who were most thoughtful among them had been pondering over things that they could not understand. Before the Christian missionaries came, many among the English had begun to feel that the crude explanations given in their own

religion were unsatisfactory, yet the wisest had no other explanations to offer. They were curious and uncertain about what lay beyond this world, and one of them compared man's life to a sparrow, which flies out of the darkness into a lighted hall and, passing quickly through the warmth and shelter of the familiar room, again flies out into the darkness. "So," he said, "the life of man here, appears for a very short space of time; but of what went before or what is to follow, we are entirely ignorant." It is easy to see how deeply men like this would be affected by the teachings of the missionaries, for Christianity came to them as a sudden revelation of many things which they had long and vainly tried to understand. Naturally capable, as we have seen, of loyalty and self-sacrifice, and able even as heathen to realize that life should be devoted to a lofty purpose, the English readily responded to the highest Christian ideals. The people, who so short a time before were pitiless sea-robbers, produced great saints, — men whose lives were devoted to the loving service of others.

**Introduction of Art and Learning.** — But this deep spiritual change in the life of the English was not the only result of Christian teaching. Up to this time the English had been practically cut off from the art and learning of Europe, and had added but little to learning or literature. The greatest civilizing force in Europe at this time was the Church. The rulers and nobles were often unable to read or write; learning was largely in the hands of the clergy, — the bishops, monks, and priests, — and the Church was the great patron and encourager of literature and the arts. So it happened that wherever the Church went, education went also. When St. Augustine brought Christianity from Rome,

he brought civilization likewise. In the old days before the English settlement, when Britain was part of the Roman Empire, the island had been bound to Rome, the city that was then the center of the civilized world. When England was Christianized, the island was again brought in contact with the art and culture of southern Europe, she shared in the common life and civilization of Christendom. The introduction of Christianity, therefore, gave a mighty intellectual, as well as spiritual, impulse to the life of the English people. Schools were established throughout England side by side with churches. Latin and Greek were taught at Canterbury. Monasteries were founded, often in the solitude of fen-land or forest, and the patient labors of the monks made a savage wilderness beautiful and productive. These monasteries became centers of civilization. They were places of refuge from the barbarity and ignorance of the world without; places of shelter and quiet, where men could study and meditate, and where they found time to practise and develop the arts of peace.

#### I. ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE BEGINNING TO KING ALFRED

As we might expect, the English, finding themselves thus suddenly possessed of new hopes, new opportunities, a wider knowledge, and a new purpose in life, tried to express this wonderful experience in words. They were no longer satisfied with repeating the old songs of battle or adventure, for they were stimulated by new subjects and ideals. So it happened that a great impulse was given to literature, and that here and there, in the quiet shelter of the monasteries, poets and scholars rose up, inspired to sing or write by the new learning or the new religion. The beginning of a great era in

the history of English literature is thus directly due to the introduction of Christianity and foreign culture which widened and enriched the nation's life.

But while many of the poems were composed on Christian or biblical subjects, the old poems were not all forgotten. Some of the old poems of heathen times were rearranged, and passages that show an acquaintance with the Bible were introduced into them. By far the longest and most interesting of the poems thus preserved is the narrative or epic poem of *Beowulf*.

**Beowulf.** — This poem tells the story of the heroic deeds of Beowulf, a famous warrior among the Geats who dwelt in the southern part of Sweden, and who was a kinsman and companion of the King. As the general tone and spirit of the poem are heathen, and as all the adventures take place out of England, by the shores of the Baltic Sea, it is believed that the story of Beowulf originated on the Continent, and that the English brought it with them in some form from their old home. Only one version of the story has come down to us, and although the legend itself is much older, this version is believed to date from the seventh or eighth century, and to have been made by some Christian poet or scribe in the English kingdom of Northumbria. How far this unknown writer altered or improved upon the old story is not certainly known, but in any case *Beowulf* gives us a very interesting glimpse of life among the Germanic tribes in early days.

The poem tells how Hrothgar, a Danish king, had built a splendid hall for himself and his followers. It stood near the coast and was the most renowned hall under the heavens. Its roof, to which a stag's antlers were fixed, shone like gold. It was known as *Heorot*, a name which means in old English a hart or stag. Here

Hrothgar feasted with his thegns, or chosen followers, and here the King and his men would sleep after the feast. The poem tells how a monstrous demon named Grendel, who lives in the neighboring moors and marshes, hears in the darkness the sounds of rejoicing that come from the lighted hall. Filled with hate and envy, Grendel steals out of the waste places where he is lurking and, entering the great hall by night, kills thirty sleeping companions of the King. A creature of darkness, with huge claws, and nails like iron, no man can resist his fiendish strength. From time to time he returns, dragging the bodies of his victims away with him to his haunts in the wilderness, until Hrothgar and his thegns no longer dare to sleep in the hall. After twelve years have passed, the young earl Beowulf, who has heard of these things, comes to Denmark in a ship, resolved to rid Hrothgar of this monster. Hrothgar welcomes the hero, who has the strength of thirty men, and that night Beowulf and his band occupy the hall. All but Beowulf are asleep when Grendel bursts the door and enters, his eyes glowing like flame. He snatches a sleeping warrior, tears him in pieces, and greedily devours him. Then he clutches Beowulf, and they wrestle in a deadly contest. The hero uses no weapon in this hour of need, but trusts solely to the strength of his own hands. The monster, master of evil, tries to escape; he longs to fly to the dark hollows of the fens, but Beowulf holds him stoutly in his terrible hand-grip. A furious wrestle follows, for the plunging monster is desperate. A great bench is overturned; the hall echoes with the confused noise of the conflict. The Danes, standing without, listen panic-stricken to the howls of the wounded monster. At last the demon, with the loss of an arm and shoulder, wrenches himself free and

flies to the fens to die. "The will of all the Danes was fulfilled by that deadly fight." But another task remains for Beowulf. Grendel's mother, more terrible than Grendel himself, comes to avenge her son's death, and carries off one of the thegns. Beowulf resolves to conquer this new foe. With his thegns he tracks the woman fiend over murky moors, through rocky gorges, and by the haunts of the water-nixies, until he comes upon a stagnant pool, frothing with blood and overhung by gloomy trees. By night the waters are livid with flame. The deer, pursued by dogs, will die on the bank rather than tempt those unsounded depths. It is a place of terror. Beowulf plunges in and fights the water fiend in her cave under the flood. His sword proves useless against her. Again he trusts to sheer strength. "So it behooves a man to act when he thinks to attain enduring praise; — he will not be caring for his life." Beowulf falls, and the fiend is above him, her knife drawn. Then the hero snatches from a pile of arms a mighty sword, giant-forged, and slays his adversary. Again there is mirth and praise at Heorot.

In the last part of the poem Beowulf has become King of the Goths and has ruled over them for fifty winters. At this time the land is worried by a dragon, who sets men's homes aflame with his fiery breath. The dragon's lair is near a wild headland at whose foot the sea breaks; here Beowulf seeks him and gives battle, trusting "in the strength of his single manhood." The old King is again victorious, but is mortally hurt. He bids a follower bring out the dragon's treasure hoard, and as the glistening gold and jewels are spread on the grass, he gives thanks that he has won them for his people. So Beowulf dies, and a lofty mound is raised in his honor on the high cliff, which sailors, in voyaging



upon the deep, could behold from far. The poem ends in a requiem of praise:

“Lamented thus  
The loyal Goths,  
Their chieftain’s fall,  
Hearth-fellows true; —  
They said he was,  
Of all kings in the world,  
Mildest to his men  
And most friendly,  
To his lieges benignest,  
And most bent upon glory.”

The poem of Beowulf not only tells us much about the dress and customs of that group of German tribes to which the English belonged, it is full of the spirit that the Early English shared with their northern kinsmen. It is a poem of battle. Its hero is the strong man who fights and conquers creatures of darkness and the wilderness. They are powers of evil, full of hate and malice, but they are very real: they have bodily form and terrible physical strength. There is little in the poem that we should call beautiful; there are no bright, rich colors to delight the eye; hardly a trace of gentleness, pathos, or pity. There is no love-story, no heroine; no fair lady appears to smile on Beowulf and reward his deeds. We are given no glimpses of the loveliness of the earth; no hint of blue skies or flowers, of green, sunny slopes, or of the song of birds. The world of these old heroes is brought before us as a cheerless, gray-hued, somber land, haunted with evil monsters. Yet while death waits for every man, while “sickness or sword-blade” shall soon take his strength from him, while Fate rules all, the stern spirit of Beowulf is neither conquered nor cast down. “Each of us shall abide the end of his life-work; let him that may work,

work his appointed deeds ere death come." The dying Beowulf rejoices, as he looks back upon his life. He has kept his own with his own might; no king dared meet him in battle; he has not sworn falsely, and "for all this," he says, "I may be glad at heart." Beowulf, we must remember, is a true English hero. He shows us what those rude northern peoples imagined a man should be. And this hero is represented as going out to fight against evil; as risking his own life for the service of others; as resigned to the great will that rules the world, and as dying content, his work finished, as one prepared to depart.

**Christian Literature.** — From this ancient hero-song of *Beowulf*, full of the strength and gloom of the heathen past, we must now pass to the literature which was directly founded on the new intellectual and religious life which the labor of the Christian teachers had begun. Two men, ALDHELM in the south, and CÆDMON in the north of England, are conspicuous as pioneers of this Christian literature. Aldhelm was both a poet and a scholar. He was born about 639, or 640, and after studying under an Irish hermit in the woods of northern Wessex, he went to Canterbury and continued his studies in the famous school there. This school, founded by St. Augustine, and improved by later teachers, was the earliest center of the higher education in England, or, indeed, in northern Europe. Aldhelm had thus unusual opportunities for that age, and he used them to good purpose. He became one of the most learned men of his time. His fame spread beyond the limits of England, and scholars from France and Scotland came to consult him. There had been great scholars in England before Aldhelm, but they were foreigners, men who had settled in England and taught the learning they had acquired abroad. Aldhelm was the first man, born

and trained in England, to gain a great and widely recognized reputation as a classical scholar. After leaving Canterbury he returned to his old school in northern Wessex, where his early teacher, MAILDULF, had founded an abbey which came to be known as *Maildulfesburgh*, or *Malmesbury*. Here he lived a useful and busy life, taking a leading part in the ecclesiastical and religious progress of his time. He wrote a number of books in Latin, both in prose and verse. He helped forward the advance of English architecture, and a church which he built at Bradford-on-Avon still stands as a memorial of his labors, almost the only Saxon church which the Norman conquerors did not pull down. He was an expert musician, and beside all this he wrote popular poems in English. These are now lost, but the people knew and sung them so late as the twelfth century, and King Alfred pronounced Aldhelm the best English poet of his time. His object in some of these English poems was to make the new religion interesting and attractive to the people, and so when the people listened to his songs for the pure pleasure of it, he managed not only to amuse them but to help and instruct them also. On the death of Maildulf, Aldhelm was made abbot of Malmesbury, and later, Bishop of Sherborne. He died in 709. He seems to have been not merely a great student, but one full of that tact, gentleness, and human kindness which make a man truly wise.

**Cædmon.** — Cædmon, the first poet of the north whose name has come down to us, was a very different man from the scholarly Aldhelm. Aldhelm, as we have just seen, represents the new education. We can learn from him how clever the English were by nature, how rapidly they could master the learning of the civilized

world when they were given the chance. Unlike Aldhelm, Cædmon was not a scholar, but an ignorant man, not able even to read and write. He lived in a bleak, storm-beaten nook on the coast of Northumbria. Even now this region is wild and impressive, and in Cædmon's time it must have been full of a stern and savage grandeur. The coast at this point is bold and rocky;



Ruins of Whitby Abbey

back from it stretch dreary tracts of rolling moorland, cut by a deep gorge or valley, through which the river Esk pushes its way to the North Sea. At the mouth of this stream was a fishing village, now the prosperous seaport of Whitby. On a cliff near by there stood in Cædmon's day the monastery of Streoneshalh, one of the great religious houses of the north, then presided over by a famous abbess named Hilda. We know but little of Cædmon's early life. Some have thought that

he was a herdsman, because on one occasion we are told that he slept in a stable to take care of the cattle. Whatever he did, it is clear that he was a plain man who worked at some humble calling. He could not make or recite poetry, and as this was a favorite recreation among his companions, it was his habit to steal away from the feast when the harp was passed from hand to hand, so that he might escape being asked to sing when his turn came. One night when he had left the feast as usual, and gone to the stables, a stranger appeared to him in a dream or a vision and said: "Cædmon, sing me a song." "I cannot sing," Cædmon answered, "and that is why I have just left the feast." "You must, however," said the stranger, "sing for me." "What shall I sing?" Cædmon asked, and he was commanded to sing "in the praise of creation." Immediately Cædmon began to sing some verses, which he had never heard before, in the praise of God the Creator of all things. The matter was brought to the notice of the Abbess; and Cædmon, being taken before her, repeated to her the verses he had composed in his sleep. The Abbess, believing that God had given to this humble man a wonderful gift, induced him to become a monk. He could not read, but the Abbess had the Bible read aloud to him, and Cædmon, ruminating on what he had heard, turned those portions of it that most appealed to him into verse, paraphrasing in this way the Books of Genesis and Exodus, "and many other histories of holy writ."

Perhaps the most memorable feature in this old story of Cædmon is the simple goodness and humility of Cædmon himself. The subjects of the old heathen songs fail to inspire him; he cannot or will not learn "the art of song from men"; to the end of his life he

writes only on religious themes that he may win men from their evil ways. His power springs from his goodness; he makes poems because he is moved to express the feelings that religion has put into his heart. His first song is a hymn of praise to God the Creator, who has hung the bright heavens as a roof over the children of men, and made the earth in its beauty for their use. His last conscious act is to wait for the singing of a song of praise. "How near is it," he asked of those who watched his death-bed, "to the hour when the brethren are wakened for lauds?" He is told that it is "but a little while." "Then," said he, "let us wait for that hour," and making over himself the sign of the cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a light slumber ended his life in silence.

Cædmon, says the old writer who has preserved his story, "was especially distinguished by the grace of God." It is this that lifts his life out of the ordinary. Religion puts a new song in his mouth, and his work begins, even as his life ends, in a *Te Deum, laudamus*, — "We praise Thee, O God." As, then, we see in Aldhelm an example of the native force of the English intellect, and of its quick advance when brought in contact with the world of knowledge, so we may well take Cædmon as an example of the way in which religion wrought upon the naturally devout and earnest English character, and so gave a new song to English literature.

**Other Religious Poems.** — Cædmon's example was followed by other poets among the Angles, and in consequence many poems on biblical or religious subjects were composed in the north. This religious poetry is on the whole a natural development of the old poetry of heathen times. The manner, or form of the verse, remains: and even the old fighting spirit, and some of

the old ideas survive, but the subjects are new, the poets have found a new source of inspiration, their work is full of a new gentleness and is illuminated by a new hope. A number of poems on biblical subjects, corresponding in a general way to those attributed to Cædmon, have been preserved, but scholars now believe these to be the work of some unknown authors, and think that all of Cædmon's poetry, except his song of praise to God the Creator, has been lost. Some religious poems were undoubtedly written by a poet named CYNEWULF, who is generally supposed to have lived in Northumbria during the latter part of the eighth century. Whoever he was, he was one of the greatest, if not the greatest English poet of his time, and his poems, although not free from sadness, are full of hope and peace.

**Scholarship in the North.** — Northumbria, the great kingdom of the Angles, became distinguished not only for its poets but for its scholars. In the southern kingdom of Wessex, literature and learning rapidly declined, for various reasons, after the death of Aldhelm. But the enthusiasm and devotion of Irish missionaries, the favor of kings and nobles, and the spread of the Roman civilization, all worked together to make Northumbria a great center of literature and education. Great schools were founded at York and Durham, rare manuscripts were gathered from the Continent, and great scholars and teachers arose who became leaders in the intellectual life of Europe.

**Bede.** — The greatest and one of the earliest of these northern scholars was *Bæda*, or *Bede*, the most famous man of letters of his time. Bede was born in 673, on the Northumbrian coast near the mouth of the river Wear. Left an orphan when he was only seven years

old, he was placed in the neighboring monastery of St. Peter, to be educated. He was afterward transferred to the associated monastery at Jarrow, which stood not far off, near the mouth of the river Tyne, and here the rest of his life was passed. At nineteen he became a deacon, and at thirty a priest. Thus, from early childhood, the monastery was his home; and for practically all his life he knew no other world. There he was trained and educated; there he taught and wrote and prayed and labored, and there, honored and devoted to the last, he died. He has himself told us the general features and chief interests of his life in a few words. "I wholly applied myself to the study of the Scriptures; and, amidst the observances of regular discipline, and the daily care of singing in the church, I always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing." So far as early training and outside surroundings can form a man, Bede was made what he was by monastic influences. He shows what those influences could accomplish under favorable conditions, and represents the monastic life at its best. To enter into the story of such a life, we must, then, know something of that little religious community of which he was a part. We must remember that in those days the English monasteries were not merely places where the monks spent all their time in prayer and fasting, still less were they comfortable retreats where men lived in luxury and idleness on the labor of others. Life in these monasteries was full of active, practical duties, for the monks performed with their own hands the necessary tasks of the household or the field. Study, meditation, and religious exercises were not neglected, but religion did not despise or shirk more common tasks, it rather encouraged them. Bede tells us of a thegn, or noble,

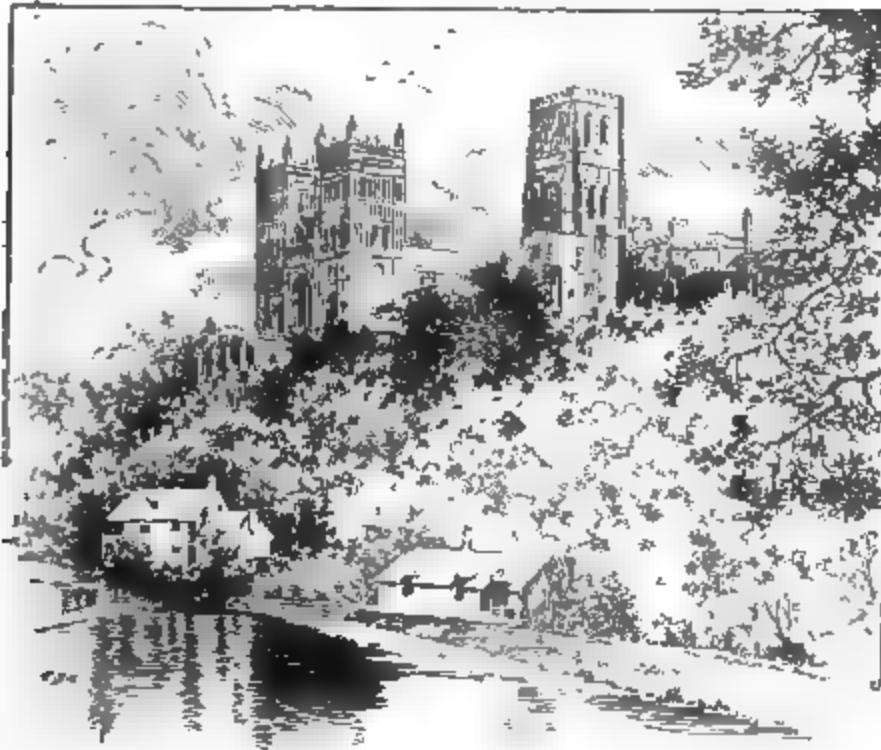


in one of the monasteries, who was not ashamed to take his part with the rest in the day's work. "It was a pleasure to him," he writes, "to be employed along with the rest of the brethren in winnowing and grinding corn, in milking the ewes and cows, in working in the bakehouse, the garden, and the kitchen, and in every other occupation in the monastery." Bede's life passed in such a community was full of varied interests, and in this daily round of ceaseless activity, which employed body, soul, and intellect, he was tranquil and content. The abbot under whom Bede began his duties was an able and progressive man, and the library at Jarrow was an unusually good one for an English monastery at that time. Bede made good use of the opportunities thus given him. With the eager love of knowledge, the patient industry, and the broad mind of a great scholar, he absorbed nearly all that was best in the learning of his day. He knew Latin and Greek; quotations from the classical poets are found in his works; and he had even some acquaintance with Hebrew.

**His Work as a Writer.** — Bede wrote about forty books, many of them text-books for the use of his scholars, upon a great variety of subjects. His commentaries on the Bible bear witness to the thoroughness of his studies; his little book on natural science shows that he had mastered the popular science of his day. Besides all this foreign learning, he knew and loved the songs of England, and he was above all a student of her history. His *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, his best known and most valuable book, is the chief authority for the period of which it treats. By this book Bede "was at once the founder of medieval history and the first English historian." Bede wrote in Latin, as all the scholars of Europe did at that time and long

after, but his last book, the closing words of which he dictated to his scribes almost with his dying breath, was an English translation of the Gospel of St. John.

**Work as Teacher.** — As a teacher Bede holds an important place in the educational history of Europe. At one time six hundred scholars, including strangers from a distance, are said to have attended his school at



Durham Cathedral. Burial place of Bede

**Jarrow.** He helped to mold the great school at York. His pupil Egbert became the head of the school, and Egbert's great pupil, **ALCUIN** (735-804), went to the Continent and organized the schools of Charlemagne, "on which the culture of the Middle Ages was based."

**Character.** — Bede did a great work, but the man himself was even greater than his books. His life in its simplicity, its singleness of purpose, its lofty aim,

has a singular unity and completeness. Gentle, hating a lie, or the least inaccuracy or slovenliness in work, and remarkably free from the prejudices of his age, the character of Bede is exceedingly lovable and noble. The stern submission to an unknown weird is lost in the joyous acceptance of a larger hope. Well might he repeat in his last illness that noble sentence of St. Ambrose: "I have not lived so as to be ashamed to live among you; nor am I afraid to die, because we have a good God." The meaning and influence of such a life grows clearer, as we read in the unaffected words of one of his disciples the story of the master's death. With failing breath he had toiled through the day, dictating his translation of St. John's Gospel, and as the day closed, his work was done. At twilight, amid his weeping scholars, his face turned toward the oratory where he was wont to pray, with "great tranquility" his soul went out from among them.

## II. FROM KING ALFRED TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

**Coming of the Danes.** — We have seen that the first great historic event which directed the course of literature in England was the coming of St. Augustine; the second was the coming of the Danes. Augustine, and the teachers who succeeded him, brought religion, learning, and industry, literature, and the arts; they started England on the path of progress. The Danes were heathen; vikings or pirates, from the creeks and fiords of Scandinavia and Denmark, as bloody and pitiless as the English themselves had been when they first invaded Britain. They belonged to the stern, hard world of the past, and the civilization which the Christian teachers had labored to build up, the heathen Danes set them-

selves to pull down and destroy. Under the influence of Christian civilization English literature had gone rapidly forward. At the end of the sixth century, when St. Augustine landed, England was heathen and illiterate, by the end of the seventh century it had produced Aldhelm and Cædmon, and by the beginning of the eighth century Northumbria was preëminent in the intellectual and religious life of western Europe. Towards the end of the eighth century (787) this steady progress was threatened by a new danger. The Danish pirates began their raids on the English coasts, and successive waves of heathenism and savagery threatened to break through all defenses and cover the land. Coming from a rocky and barren region, these northern adventurers were fascinated by the comparative richness and fertility of the more southern lands. The wealth of the great religious houses, rich in gold and silver plate and embroidered vestments, made them an especial object of attack, and so it happened that the very places which were the chief sources and centers of literature were the first to be destroyed. In 793 the Danes plundered the monastery of Lindisfarne; in 794 they sacked and burnt the monasteries at Wearmouth and Jarrow, which had once sheltered Bede. In the eighth century they came to plunder and to sail away; in the ninth they came and conquered. They captured York, where Alcuin had taught (867), and Christian Northumbria became the land of the heathen Dane. They sacked abbeys and churches, they burned the libraries and broke up the schools. Streoneshalh, where Cædmon chanted his sacred songs, was left a heap of ruins. They plundered the abbeys of Peterborough, Crowland, and Ely, the great religious houses of the fenland to the north of London. All England was in danger of

sinking back into the ignorance and heathenism out of which it had so lately climbed.

**King Alfred.** — The man who saved England at this crisis was King Alfred (871–901), the only one of all their rulers that the English people have called “The Great.” Alfred, at the age of twenty-two, became King of Wessex, when the Danes were already masters of a great part of England. Learning and literature had been wiped out in Northumbria, as you would wipe a picture off a slate, and Alfred’s own kingdom of Wessex seemed about to go down under the same force. But at last, after years of patient and stubborn heroism, Alfred gained a great victory over the Danes at Edington (878), and Alfred’s right to rule over all of the south and a part of central England was acknowledged. Alfred’s success not only saved England, it saved English literature also. Wherever the Danes ruled, heathenism was triumphant, and if the Danes had conquered Wessex, religion and learning must have perished there, as they had done in the north. But while Alfred had saved southern England from the Danes, his work was hardly half done. Not only must he keep what he had won, and hold his land safe from the Danes beyond the border, he must establish law and order, and in countless ways improve the condition of the people within his own kingdom. The Danes were a danger from without, but there were other dangers within, for during the long years of war the people had grown ignorant, and the land had suffered from the lack of a strong and settled government. Alfred’s first duty was to strengthen the defenses of his kingdom, and to give his people a firm government and good laws. But Alfred did not stop here. After proving himself a soldier, he proved himself a statesman; and after prov-

ing himself a statesman, he showed that he was a true lover of literature and learning.

It had been right for Alfred to fight, to fortify his towns, organize a navy, improve his army, administer justice but Alfred saw that even peace, security, and order were not enough; something more and even higher than these things was now needed to make his people all that he wished them to be. The King felt that it was righteousness which exalted a nation, that the only true foundation for his people's welfare was that they should think noble thoughts and do the things that were right. He saw that the great supports to this higher life of a nation were religion and education, but when he looked around him he saw that the Church had grown weak, and that the people were ignorant. He often looked back, he tells us, to the earlier and happier days in England, and thought what wise men there were then, how the kings " obeyed God and His messengers," and " how it went well with them both in war and wisdom." Now all this was over. Students no longer came to England from abroad to study in her famous schools. Once, the great scholars among the Angles were the teachers of Europe, but now the priests hardly understood their own Latin service-books, or were able to translate from Latin into English. Ships and armies could not exalt a people whose very teachers were ignorant; churches, monasteries, and schools needed to be rebuilt as well as the walls of London. Accordingly, after he had concluded a second peace with the Danes (886), Alfred felt free at last to turn to one part of his great work which the dangers and pressing needs of his kingdom had so far obliged him to postpone. He set himself to encourage religion and learning, which in those days we must remember went

hand in hand, to teach his subjects those things which help men to live rightly. He restored the religious houses, and founded a school for the training of the young nobles. He gathered learned men about him, from the old Anglian kingdom of Mercia, from Gaul, and from Wales. Before this time learning had been almost entirely confined to the clergy. Alfred wished his clergy to be well-educated, but he did not stop there, so far as possible he wanted to train and educate the nation. He directed that *all the sons of English freemen*, except those who were too poor to spare the time, should be taught to read English perfectly, and that all those who were able to continue their studies should be taught Latin. One feature of Alfred's plan deserves our especial notice: the language of the ordinary, the elementary education, was to be English, the language of the people, and not Latin, which at that time was the language usually employed by the scholars of Europe. The people could not all learn Latin; if education was to be general, their books must be in the familiar English which all could understand. But where were such books to be found? At this time there were, indeed, poems in English, but hardly a single work of any value in English prose; all the text-books were in Latin, as well as all those histories and religious books which the King especially wanted his people to know. Alfred himself undertook to take literature out of Latin and bring it to his people. In spite of the weight of his "manifold cares," and the heavy burden of illness, he set himself the task of translating into English the books which he thought "most needful," and in so doing he unconsciously became the true beginner of English prose.

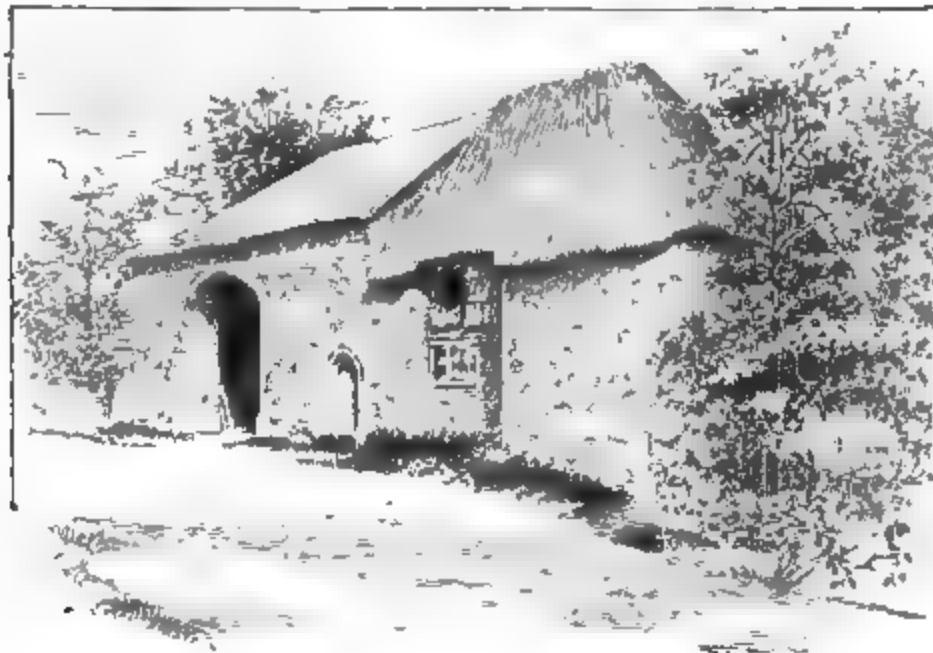
**Alfred's Translations.** — Among the books which

Alfred translated were the *Regula* (or *Cura*) *Pastoralis*, of Pope Gregory the Great, the *Ecclesiastical History*, of Bede, a *History of the World*, by a Spanish monk named Orosius, and the *Consolations of Philosophy*, by Boethius. There is something significant in the King's choice. The *Regula Pastoralis*, or *Shepherd's Model*, was a handbook for the clergy, the shepherds of the people, intended to guide them in their duties and set before them the model of the ideal priest. The clergy were the teachers of the masses, and on the improvement of the clergy the success of Alfred's effort to enlighten the nation must largely depend. Bede's *History*, on the other hand, was a book for the people. Alfred himself found inspiration in the study of the great and noble Englishmen of the past, and he felt, no doubt, that a knowledge of England's growth and former greatness would rouse and strengthen the spirit of patriotism. Then he chose a general history to broaden men's minds by its stories of other nations and distant times. To these two histories, which related how men had lived and acted in England and in the great world without, Alfred added a book of wise meditations on life itself. This book of Boethius' was one of the most famous and influential books of the time. A great many people throughout Europe then turned to it for help, and, long after, the historian Gibbon called it "a golden volume." In this book, as in some of the others, Alfred was not merely a translator, he did not hesitate to introduce into his books original passages of his own, and some of the meditations which he added to those of Boethius bring us very close to the devout and lofty spirit of this great King.

Another great work with which Alfred's name is associated is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. From very



early times it had been the custom in certain English monasteries to make a brief record of the most important historical events of each year. During Alfred's reign the *Annals*, or yearly *Chronicles* which had been kept at Winchester, the capital of Wessex, were revised and added to, and the King is supposed to have inspired and directed this important work, or possibly to have done some of it himself.



Ruins of Hyde Abbey, Winchester, where Alfred is supposed to be buried

**From the Death of Alfred to the Norman Conquest.**—King Alfred is one of the noblest men in all history. Great alike in defeat and in victory, in war and in peace, his life was a force for good in the Church, in the state, and in the school. While he lived he "sought to live worthily," and his people were lifted to a higher level by his labors and his example. He saved England from the Danes, and he saved literature and learning for England. As Northumbria had become the great literary center of the country, through the labors of such

men as Bede and Alcuin, so when the Danes destroyed learning in the north, Wessex became the literary center of England through the labors of Alfred. English literature before the Norman Conquest falls naturally into two divisions: in the first, which stretches from the time of Cædmon (about 670), to the destruction of literature by the Danes (about 867) the literary activity of the country is chiefly in the north. In the second, which stretches from the revival of literature under Alfred (about 886) to the coming of the Normans (1066), the literary activity of the country is almost wholly in the south. The glory of the northern literature, in the first period, is its poetry, composed in old English or Anglo-Saxon, and, to a less degree, its Latin prose. But during the second period little poetry appears to have been written; the chief glory of the southern literature is, that Alfred and his successors began and developed English prose, and gave it a place in the people's life.

We must pass rapidly over the interval between the death of Alfred in 901 and the Conquest of England by the Normans in 1066. During a great part of this period the English were either trying to win back the north from the Danes, or endeavoring to repel the attacks of fresh bands of Danish invaders, and the result was not favorable either to learning or to literature. Until long after the Norman Conquest there were no signs of a literary revival in the north; the Danes had done their work of destruction too well. In the south alone, where the effects of Alfred's example and practical enthusiasm still lingered, we find the traditions of culture and the signs of some literary activity. In the reign of EDGAR THE PEACEABLE (958-975), when the land had a short interval of rest and security from the Danish peril,

DUNSTAN (924–988), Archbishop of Canterbury, and his follower and fellow worker, ÆTHELWOLD (908?–984), did much to improve the education of the clergy and advance the study of Latin. ÆLFRIC (born about 940?), a pupil of Æthelwold, carried on his master's work still further. Ælfric, like Bede, to whom he is sometimes compared, was the greatest English scholar of his time. Like Alfred he translated books from Latin into English, and like Alfred he is a great figure in the history of English prose. His best known work is his *Homilies* or sermons, probably the best example of old English, or Anglo-Saxon, prose that we possess. Moreover, during this interval between King Alfred and the Norman Conquest additions were made to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

It is not probable that any corresponding progress was made in English poetry during this time; at least it is certain that only a few poems composed during this period have been preserved. Two battle-songs of the tenth century, however, are so full of the old fighting spirit that they ought to be read and remembered. The first of them, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, celebrated the victory of Alfred's grandson, King ÆTHELSTAN, over the Scots in 937. There is a spirited version of it in modern English by Lord Tennyson. The second poem, of which we possess only a fragment, treats of the *Battle of Maldon* (991), a bloody encounter between a band of Danish invaders and the East Saxons, or men of Essex. The English were defeated and their leader, the brave Earl or Ealdorman, Byrhtnorth, was slain. With this picture of an English hero, overcome by a foreign enemy, and dying surrounded by his faithful vassals, with an unconquered spirit, the war-poetry of that older, Anglo-Saxon, England fitly comes to an end.

**Summary.** — We have now reached the close of an era in the history of English literature. The first English were, as we have seen, a northern people of Teutonic or Germanic stock, and in this first era it is chiefly the Teutonic genius, the spirit of the north, that inspires their literature. The northern spirit is indeed stimulated, broadened, and refined by the religion and culture of southern Europe, but it is more or less present in their poetry from *Beowulf* to the *Battle of Maldon*. Helped forward by this contact with foreign education and with higher ideas of life before unknown to them, the English of the eighth century surpass every other nation of northern Europe in scholarship and literary achievement. But this superiority does not last, literature and learning are swept away by a fresh invasion of barbarian warriors. And while the genius and energy of Alfred bring about a revival of letters in the south, even in the south the progress of literature after Alfred's death is not steady. Creditable prose treatises are written from time to time, but, so far as we can judge, the genius of England stands in need of some new inspiration, some power that shall stir it to life as the influence of Christianity had done some four centuries earlier. It is possible that the English genius would have revived without any help from the Continent, that the learning and literature which during the tenth century seemed a dim and flickering flame would of themselves have burst into a sudden blaze. This is possible, but it is not likely. We cannot tell what might have been, but one thing is certain, we do know that when the genius of Anglo-Saxon England seemed in need of fresh energy, when the fire — to use our same illustration — seemed to be burning low, that energy was given, that fuel was supplied by the entrance of the Normans.

## IMPORTANT DATES

First permanent settlement of the English in Britain . . . .	about 449
St. Augustine introduces Christianity into Kent . . . . .	597
Aidan and other missionaries preach Christianity in north of England . . . . .	about 635
ALDHELM, poet of the south: Abbot of Malmesbury . . . . .	671
CÆDMON composes religious poems at Whitby in the north . . . . .	about 670
<i>Beowulf</i> , the old English epic; probably first transcribed in the north . . . . .	about 7th or 8th Cent.
LITERARY SUPREMACY OF THE NORTH . . . . .	about 670 to 800 or 850
(Includes CÆDMON, BEDE, CYNEWULF, ALCUIN, etc.)	
The culture and literature of the north attacked and at last destroyed by the Danes . . . . .	about 787-878
LITERARY SUPREMACY OF THE SOUTH . . . . .	about 886-1066
(Includes KING ALFRED, reigns 871-901; DUNSTAN, ÆLFRIC, etc.)	
The entrance of Norman influence under EDWARD THE CON- FESSION . . . . .	reigned 1042-1066
THE NORMAN CONQUEST . . . . .	1066

## CHAPTER II

### THE RULE OF THE NORMANS

IN the ninth century we find bands of northern pirates sailing from the creeks and bays of Scandinavia and Denmark to rob and conquer, as the English tribes had done three or four centuries before. One of the places they attacked was the coast of France, and early in the tenth century (912) a band of these wild adventurers, under a leader named *Rolf*, or *Rollo*, forced the French King to grant them possession of a tract of land in northern France, stretching back from the English Channel on either side of the River Seine. These northern adventurers were called *Normans*, that is, men from the north, and the land they won in France came to be known as *Normannia*, or *Normandy*, — the land of the Northmen. When they won this country, the Normans were hard, fierce, untamed men, like their kinsmen the English when they conquered Britain, or like the Danish sea rovers that destroyed the English monasteries. But once settled on French territory, these northern heathen showed themselves wonderfully quick to give up their old half-barbarous manners and ideas, and to learn new ways. They became Christians; they gave up their own language, adopting and improving the language of the people they had conquered. In the north they had been skilful seamen, in the south they became the most expert horsemen in Europe. Moreover, as many of them married French

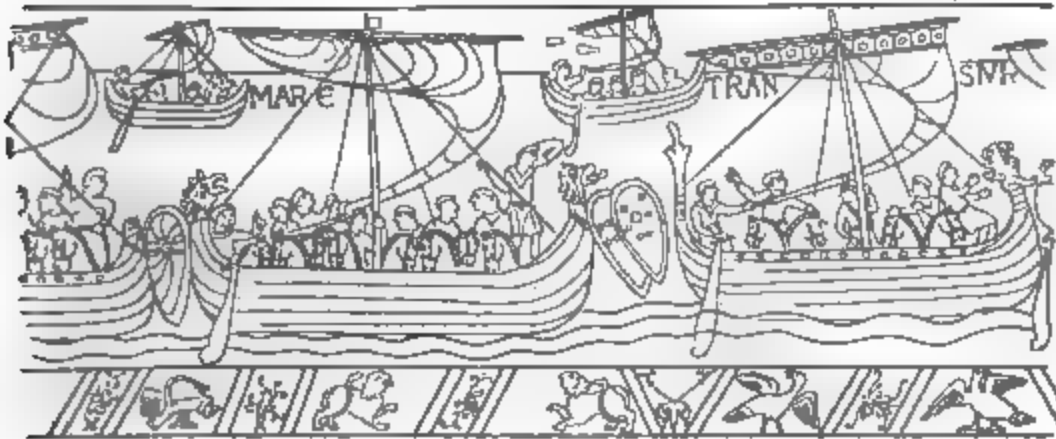
wives, the Normans in France soon ceased to be a people of purely northern stock.

As the Normans were thus changed in so many ways by the civilization of the people among whom they had settled, it is a good thing for us to know whence that civilization came. The Normans had established themselves in a country which had once been a part of the great Roman Empire, and the civilization which they acquired was thus largely Roman in its origin and character. The very language of the people, for example, which the Norman took for his own, was a corruption of the Latin which had been learned in the old days from the Roman conqueror. In France, these northern barbarians were surrounded on every side by the influences of the south. They built splendid churches in a style derived, it is thought, from northern Italy, and before they conquered England they welcomed famous Italian scholars among them, and set them to teach in the Norman schools.

The result of all this was, that through their readiness to give up their own traditions and their old ways for foreign fashions, the Normans, by the time they came to conquer England, had become a very different people from their rough ancestors who had sailed up the Seine to win a home for themselves a century and a half before. They had lost their boorish manners, and had become comparatively polished and courtly. They were lovers of the new code of chivalry. They were, says an old Chronicler, "proudly apparelled, delicate in their food, but not excessive," and they looked down upon the English, despising them for their ignorance and their rude ways. And so, although the Normans were originally men of the north, the civilization which the Norman brought with him into England was in

many ways not northern at all but southern, based as it was on that of Italy and France.

**The Effect of the Norman Rule.**—Such were the people who became the masters of England in 1066, by



William sailing to England (Bayeux Tapestry).

the victory of the Norman duke, William, over the English king, Harold, on the field of Senlac, or Hastings. How did this great event affect England and her literature?

1. *The Norman Conquest brought a foreign language and a foreign civilization into England.*

The Normans spoke differently, dressed differently, lived differently, and thought differently from the English, and they carried with them throughout England a world of strange ways and new ideas. Indeed, they did even more than bring in these foreign ways, for the fact that by the Conquest the Normans became the upper or ruling class was an incentive to some of the English to learn the language and adopt the customs of those in authority. It is not enough to say that Norman and English lived side by side; to understand what



took place we must realize that everywhere the Norman was above, the Englishman underneath. The chief positions in the State were held by Normans; the great nobles were now Norman nobles; and nearly all of the great landed estates were taken away from the English and given to the Normans. Besides all this, the English clergy were turned out of the most important offices in the Church, and their places given to Normans or to other foreigners. Thus, shortly after the Conquest, LANFRANC, a famous Italian writer and scholar from a monastic school in Normandy, was made Archbishop of Canterbury instead of the English Archbishop Stigand. In the same way the English bishops were replaced by Normans, and the great abbeys and monasteries passed under foreign control. This last change had a very direct and important effect on learning and literature, for the clergy in those days were the scholars and teachers of the nation. As Normans were at the head of the monastic schools, the task of educating the people passed almost entirely into their hands, and as the leading clergy were generally Normans or foreigners, the leading writers were mostly Norman, or else men trained by Norman teachers who wrote under the influence of foreign ideas. And as the Norman clergy brought in the learning of the Continent and taught it in the schools, the Norman nobles brought with them their poetry, long romances, different in subject and in style from the poems to which the English had been accustomed. The Norman lords and ladies delighted in these long poems of chivalric deeds or knightly love, and in many a castle the former rulers of England listened to this foreign poetry in a language foreign to English soil. So on every hand, in Church and State, in camp, and castle, and in the King's Court, and in the school,

this world of the Norman lay like a weight on the English, sinking into England as a mass of melting snow saturates the earth beneath.

2. *The Norman Conquest, by joining England to the Continent, kept the English in close contact with a continental civilization.*

If the Normans had abandoned their own land when they conquered England, it is likely that they would have held less strongly to their own ways. But we must remember that William did not cease to be the Duke of Normandy when he became King of England, and that for about one hundred and fifty years after the Conquest the English continued to be governed by sovereigns who also ruled over lands on the Continent. England thus became a part of Normandy, the province of a foreign power. Many of the Norman nobles held lands in both countries, and the people of the upper class went frequently from one country to the other with their followers. Thus by the close relation between England and the Continent, foreign ways were constantly being brought in from abroad, and the learning and poetry of the Continent found a free passage into England.

3. *The immediate effect of this foreign influence was to establish the Norman-French language and literature in England as the language and literature of the upper classes, thus forcing the English language into an inferior position, and for a time almost destroying English poetry and prose.*

At first, under the iron rule of William the Conqueror, it must have seemed as though everything English were destined to be crushed out and swept away. The

English seemed likely to lose their language, for all the people in high places spoke Norman-French, and Norman-French was the language of the schools and of the Law Courts. The old literature of the English seemed about to come to an end. For a time, indeed, some monks continued the old practice of writing the national history in English, but in 1154 the record ceased, and after a life of many centuries the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* came abruptly to an end. After a time monks educated under Norman influences wrote the nation's history in Latin, in a more finished and connected style than that of the brief records of the vanished Anglo-Saxon age. Many learned books on religious or even scientific subjects were also written in Latin, and — after the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was given up — English prose seemed dead. It seemed at first as though English poetry, as well as English prose, had been destroyed by the Conquest. Here and there, in some humble home, some out-of-the-way farmhouse or peasant's hut, the native English may have sung the old songs and ballads of their fathers in their native tongue, but although the old poetry may have thus lingered in an obscure way among the people, the native literature, like the native language, was unnoticed or despised by the Normans. For some time after the Conquest, many of the Normans knew little or nothing of the English language, and some of them disdained to learn the speech of those whom they looked down upon as their inferiors. The King and his nobles could not have understood the English poems even if they had cared to do so, and so the poets of the rich and powerful were naturally Normans who wrote according to the Norman fashion. To win the favor of the great, therefore, the poets had to make verses in the foreign

manner and in the foreign, or Norman-French, tongue. We can thus see how it happened that, for about a century and a half after the Norman Conquest, the literature of the native English almost disappeared, covered up and buried, as it was, under a mass of foreign literature in Latin and in French, which was produced by and for the members of the upper and ruling classes.

*4. The final effect of this foreign influence was to furnish new subjects and ideas to English literature, to alter the form of English verse, to modify but not destroy the English language, and to widen but not essentially to change the English genius and character.*

From what has been said, it is clear that the immediate effect of the Norman invasion was to plunge both language and literature in England into a state of confusion. There was no one language understood and used by the whole nation. Many Normans could not speak English, a great mass of the English could not speak French, still others, both among the English and the Normans, became familiar with both of the rival languages, speaking in French or in English as the occasion required. Literature shared in this general confusion of tongues and styles. Many wrote in French or Latin, a few still held to English. Nearly all the poets employed the foreign verse or manner, and wrote on foreign subjects; but among the English the old traditions of English poetry were still obscurely cherished. The struggle between English and Norman on the battle-field of Hastings did not end, in one sense, with Duke William's victory. Time was needed to show which was really the stronger race. Would the Norman be able to force his language, his literature, his national character on the English, or would the

English preserve the language and traditions of the past, and force the Normans to conform to the English ways? During the three centuries between the coming of the Normans and the life and work of the great poet CHAUCER, this question was answered for all time. Whatever else we forget about this confused period, we must remember that it is the time of struggle between rival civilizations when the whole future of the English literature and language is at stake.

What then, was the result of this long struggle? On the whole the stubborn loyalty of the English to old ways proved in the end stronger than the foreign influence, and while England learned much from the Normans, and was greatly helped by the foreign ways, the country came out of this long period of foreign rule modified and improved, but fundamentally unchanged.

**Literature After the Norman Conquest.** — The books produced during this confused period, while they had an important influence upon the later history of the literature, are not in themselves very interesting to the general reader of to-day. A few words on the general course of literary history will serve to make what has already been said more clear and definite.

From the Conquest to the opening of the thirteenth century, literature in England was almost entirely Norman or composed under Norman influence. Many of the histories of England in Latin, or *Latin Chronicles*, were written during this time. One of the earliest of these Latin Chronicles was compiled by a monk in the priory at Worcester, known as FLORENCE OF WORCESTER (d. 1118), and one of the best and latest was that of MATTHEW PARIS (d. 1259), a monk in the Abbey of St. Albans, which lies a little north of London.

**Celtic Influence on English Literature.** — During the

twelfth century, while English history was being told by foreigners or in a foreign fashion, an important influence entered England from another direction. This new influence came from the Britons, or Welsh, in the west. There was a priest named Geoffrey who lived in the Welsh border country, and who was probably of Welsh descent. He was archdeacon of the Church at Monmouth, and is commonly known as GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH. In 1152, just before his death, he was made Bishop of St. Asaph, a little town in the mountains of northern Wales. This Geoffrey wrote a book in Latin, which pretended to be a history of Britain from the earliest times. In reality it was a collection of old Celtic legends and traditions about imaginary Kings of Britain. Geoffrey himself may have believed these stories, at any rate he told them as though he thought they were true. He tells us how Brutus, the descendant of the Trojan hero, Æneas, came to Albion, or Britain, which was then inhabited by giants, and how he built a new Troy, the city of London, by the river Thames. Now this book, while it has no value as history, had a great effect on literature. It contained many wonderful stories, such as the story of *King Lear* and his daughters, the story of *Ferrex and Porrex*, which three hundred years later was made the subject of the first English tragedy; and, above all, the story of the great British King *Arthur*. While these stories were told by Geoffrey in a comparatively brief and prosaic way, readers of that time were fascinated by their novelty and charm. Poets both in Normandy and England retold some of these stories at greater length, finding in these Celtic legends a great storehouse of romance, and so, in time, many of the stories of the Celts in Wales, or in Brittany across the Channel, became an important part of Nor-

man and of English literature. To the Norman influence on English literature there was thus added in the twelfth century the influence of the Celt.

**The Romances.** — This period immediately succeeding the Conquest is also the period of those long chivalric poems or *metrical romances*, in which the Normans excelled. Some of these poems dealt with the exploits of the famous French King, Charlemagne, and his Knights, some treated of Alexander the Great, some of the siege of Troy, while one large and important group, or cycle, of poems retold the various adventures of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. These romances were very different from *Beowulf* or other narrative poems of the north. Romantic love, absent in *Beowulf*, holds a large place in many of them; they are in a different verse from that used by the old English gleemen, and while they tell a story pleasantly and easily, they lack the tragic power and depth which we find in the poetry of the Germanic races of the north.

**Triumph of the English Language over the French.** — For many generations after the Conquest the language and literature of the foreigner continued to hold the first place in England, so that the people of the upper class, if they thought about the matter at all, must have felt sure that in time French would become the national speech. But in the thirteenth century the native English speech began to force its way slowly towards a position of wider importance, and, in the century following, it triumphed over its foreign rival.

This victory of the English language over the French was largely due to two things. In the first place, English was the mother tongue of the great mass of the people. And not only did the people who spoke Eng-

lish outnumber those who spoke French, but the English were slow and averse to changes, so they kept stubbornly to their own speech. In the second place, this triumph of English was promoted by an important change in the relation of England to the French-speaking people on the Continent. In 1204 King John lost nearly all his continental possessions, a territory comprising three fifths of modern France. Up to this time the upper class in England had been in frequent communication with the people in Normandy and in the other French possessions of the English crown. Some of the great nobles held estates on both sides of the Channel, and the Kings of England themselves spent most of their time in their possessions abroad. Now, at the opening of the thirteenth century, this close connection between England and the Continent came suddenly to an end. When England was joined to the Continent by the Norman Conquest, it was as though a bridge had been laid across the Channel by which French and Latin culture could pass over; when John lost Normandy, it was as though that bridge had been broken down. England was no longer one of the possessions of a foreign ruler; hereafter the King, having lost his lands abroad, must make England his home. Even before this, the distinctions between the Normans and the English in England had begun to disappear. Now "every man in England was an Englishman and nothing more," and the whole people were bound together in one united nation, as they had never been before. All this worked surely but slowly in favor of a general adoption of the English language, in the daily life of the people and in their literature.

**Rise of Literature in English.** — The causes that were thus bringing about a more wide-spread use of English



in the thirteenth century were at the same time contributing to the development of a literature in the native tongue. The first important work illustrating this revival was LAYAMON'S *Brut* (about 1205), a poem written near the border of Wales. Although Layamon lived in such a remote place and time, he seems to us a very real person. His home was at Earnley, he tells us, "a noble church upon the Severn's bank." There he passed a quiet, studious life as parish priest, and there "it came to him in mind, in his chief thought, that he would tell the noble deeds of England." With this purpose in view, he traveled "wide over the land," seeking the books that told of England's past, and procured, among others, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and the *Brut* "of the French Clerk that was named Wace." The latter was a Norman-French poem, written in all probability in England, and perhaps given by its author to Eleanor, Queen of Henry II. It retold in a more vigorous and entertaining way the fabulous stories that Geoffrey of Monmouth had told in his legendary history of Britain. "Layamon laid before him these books, and turned the leaves; lovingly he beheld them;" and with Wace's poem as a model he wrote an English metrical version of the same stories. The poem is interesting principally for its tales of King Arthur and his Round Table. Living on the Welsh border, Layamon was evidently familiar with many traditions of the British hero which Wace passed over, and was thus able to enter more fully into the spirit of his theme. With true British sympathy he tells the story of Merlin, the enchanter; and of the great-hearted and valorous king, leading his armies against the heathen invaders. In a vivid way he pictures the horrors of warfare in that far-off time, and recounts with genuine poetic

feeling the death of Arthur and his faring forth to sea.

**Romances.** — In addition to Layamon's *Brut* there were a number of metrical romances in the thirteenth century that likewise mark the rise of English poetry. The fact that more and more people were speaking English seems to have encouraged the writing of a number of English versions of Norman-French romances which before this time had been popular in France or among the upper classes in England. The English people were appropriating and absorbing the French literature which a hundred and fifty years before had been entirely new to them. Some of these romances, however, such as *Havelok the Dane* (about 1270–1280), and *Guy of Warwick* (about 1300), are founded on Norman versions of Danish or English themes, just as Layamon's *Brut* was based upon a French version of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Havelok and Sir Guy are local heroes; and the poems are written in a characteristically English vein. The story of Havelok begins:

“Hearken to me, good men,  
Wives, maidens, and all men,  
Of a tale to you I'll tell,  
Whoe'er will hear, and on it dwell.  
.  
.  
.  
At the beginning of our tale  
Fill me a cup of full good ale,  
And we'll drinken here a spell,  
That Christ may shield us all from hell.”

No doubt these tales, sung by a minstrel before an eager audience in the hall of a great house, or to a group of servants in the kitchen, or of travelers at an inn, were listened to intently, even though they were often long and sometimes tedious. They were interesting because they were stories of adventure and romance. The French and British romances are very different in spirit

from the old Teutonic poems, such as *Beowulf*, in which life is pictured as a struggle with fate and the powers of evil, and where the world is bleak and gloomy. Here we read of spring and flowers, of harping, love, and chivalry, of knights and fair ladies. By some sudden enchantment we pass to the land of faërie, where lofty castles with crystal walls and pillars of gold are dazzling to the eyes. The heroes of romance ride abroad in quest of adventure and renown, seeking by knightly deeds to prove their valor or to win the love of ladies. Graceful sentiment, gentleness, and courtesy, and often, in the love stories, a genuine and absorbing passion, are mingled with a love of the cheerful aspects of Nature and a sense of manly strength and honor. Such are the elements of this romantic atmosphere, which is essentially a Celtic contribution to literature. The Celtic genius, taking some of the stories from the old mythologies, some facts of history and traditions of heroes, has transformed them in its own way, and, combining them with tales from Irish fairy-lore, has woven a tissue of romance that has charmed and entertained the world from that time to this.

French models were also a stimulating influence in the writing of didactic poems — poems written for the purpose of teaching a moral — such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* (about 1220), in which two birds dispute over the merits of their different ways of living. Thus, the nightingale represents the lover of pleasure, who gives himself up to the joys of the moment, and who glories in the pride and pomp of life. The owl praises self-restraint, and the earnest seeking after higher and more lasting pleasures than those of the flesh. The contrast between the lives of the two birds is that between man's æsthetic sense and his moral sense, or

between the pleasure-loving nations of the south and the more austere and religious peoples of the north.

**Songs.** — The English songs, too, some of which have a wonderful grace and melody, certainly owe much to French and foreign influences. Some of these are religious; hymns to the Virgin full of a warmth of adoration which is not English but southern. Some are war-songs; others, again, are songs of love and springtime, so true and beautiful, that we, reading them after six hundred years, can still feel the quick pulse of youth and gladness beat in them. Perhaps the most beautiful of these love-songs is the one to Alysoun:

“Between soft March and April showers,  
When sprays of bloom from branches spring,  
And when the little bird 'mid flowers  
Doth song of sweetness, loudly sing:  
To her with longing love I cling,  
Of all the world the fairest thing,  
Whose thrall I am, who bliss can bring,  
And give to me life's crown.  
A gracious fate to me is sent;  
Methinks it is by heaven lent;  
From women all, my heart is bent,  
To light on Alysoun.”

These lines have a delicate and dreamy beauty, a grace and sentiment, which we cannot but feel has been learned from England's foreign masters. But on the other hand we must not conclude that all these English songs were but echoes of the French. There are occasional touches of description, and here and there a strain of melody, that seem to have been taken from the poetry of the people. In one of the thirteenth-century love-songs, for instance, there is a refrain not easily forgotten, — superior in grace and melody to all the rest of the poem:

“Blow, Northern wind,  
Send thou me my sweeting,  
Blow, Northern wind, blow, blow, blow!”

The famous *Cuckoo Song* (about 1250), which is full of the homely, wholesome life of farmyard and pasture, is thought to echo the refrain of a popular dance-song:

“Summer is a-coming in,  
Loud sing cuckoo:  
Groweth seed and bloweth mead,  
And springeth the wood new.  
Sing cuckoo, cuckoo.

Ewe bleateth after lamb,  
Cow after calf calls,  
Bullock sterteth, buck verteth,  
Merry sing cuckoo.  
Cuckoo, cuckoo, well sings the cuckoo.  
So sweet you never knew,  
Sing cuckoo, now sing cuckoo.”

All these poems — songs, romances, debates, and histories — prepared the way for a still greater development of English literature in the fourteenth century, which culminated in the works of the greatest of Middle English writers, GEOFFREY CHAUCER. Thus, in the period immediately following the Norman Conquest, English poetry was enriched with new verse-forms; and English literature absorbed a mass of legend, myth, and romance from Wales, from Brittany and France. Literature in the English language revived. A larger and ever-increasing audience was raised for the writers of the future, and the final triumph of the English language and of English literature over the Norman-French in England was almost assured.

IMPORTANT DATES

Battle of Hastings (or Senlac)	1066
WILLIAM I, or William the Conqueror	1066–1087
Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury	1070
Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury	1093
• The Crusades	1096–1270
Florence of Worcester	} Latin Chroniclers { died 1118
William of Malmesbury	
Geoffrey of Monmouth's <i>History of the Kings of Britain</i>	1147
Rise of Oxford University	about 1133–1186
HENRY II, first of the Plantagenet or Angevin Kings	1154–1189
Murder of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury	1170
RICHARD I (Richard Cœur de Lion)	1189–1199
KING JOHN (John Lackland)	1199–1216
England loses Normandy	1204
Layamon's <i>Brut</i> , first long poem in English after the Norman Conquest	about 1205
The Great Charter of Liberties (Magna Charta)	1215
<i>The Owl and the Nightingale</i> , an English debate poem	about 1220
<i>The Cuckoo Song</i> , first important English song after the Norman Conquest	about 1250
Peterhouse College, Cambridge, founded	1257
Matthew Paris, a later Latin chronicler	died 1259
Commons first represented in Parliament	1265
<i>Havelok the Dane</i>	} English romances { about 1270–1280
<i>Guy of Warwick</i>	

FOREIGN DATES

St. Francis of Assisi	1182–1226
Dante, born at Florence, 1265, died at Ravenna	1321

## CHAPTER III

### THE AGE OF CHAUCER

“Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,  
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;  
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,  
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,  
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;

. . . . .  
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer’s pen  
Moves over bills of lading.”

— WILLIAM MORRIS, *Prologue to the Earthly Paradise*.

#### ENGLAND IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

To get near to Chaucer, to read his poetry with entire sympathy and delight, one must forget our modern world for the time and go back in imagination into that other world of the fourteenth century, in the midst of which he lived and worked. There was much in that world to fire the imagination and to quicken the energies of a great poet. It was a brilliant, stirring, and ambitious time, when life was full of violent and dramatic contrasts. It was peculiarly a time of change. Europe was already restive under the leaven of new ideas. Here and there men were beginning to grow impatient of the old restraints and conventions, and to rebel against long established institutions or accepted modes of thought. The old order indeed yet remained; but as we look back to the fourteenth century and interpret it by our knowledge of the centuries that followed,

we see plainly signs of a new order, a new way of living, and a new conception of life. We cannot study the history of this time without finding traces of the new spirit growing under the old forms, which it will presently break and utterly destroy.

**Chivalry.** — Chivalry, for instance, was a peculiarly medieval institution, and in the fourteenth century chivalry still flourished in even more than its former pomp and splendor. In England, the reign of Edward III was marked by a showy magnificence. In that reign the war between England and France, known as the Hundred Years' War, was begun, and this contest between two powerful and chivalric nations was the occasion of a great display of knightly deeds. Then, as Froissart wrote, were many "honorable and noble adventures of feats of arms, done and admired." It was in this reign that Edward, the Black Prince, when a boy of sixteen, won his spurs at Crécy, and that the blind king of Bohemia was guided by his own command into the thick of the battle "that he might strike one stroke with his sword." The heart of the old chronicler Froissart kindles as he recites the names of the gallant knights who fought for England: "they in all their deeds were so valiant that they ought to be reputed as sovereigns in all chivalry." In England the outward forms and shows of chivalry were yet an accepted part of the nation's life. King Edward was a patron of the tournament; he had a Round Table at Windsor, in emulation of that of King Arthur; and he instituted the famous chivalric Order of the Garter.

**Chaucer's England.** — There were many other things in this England of the fourteenth century to remind us that Chaucer lived in a medieval world. If we find the splendor and romance of the Middle Ages, we find



also the dirt and squalor, the crude ignorance and the unspeakable coarseness, which were at least equally characteristic of that time. The land itself was in part sheer wilderness. There were great stretches of forest, the haunts of the deer, the gray wolf, the boar, and the wild bull; there were marshes, such as the great fens of Lincolnshire and Somerset, untenanted as yet save by the birds. It was a rough, cruel world; and life was none too safe even on the king's highway. The townspeople dwelt within walls and shut the gates at curfew. At



Old London Bridge

Newcastle-on-Tyne, near the Scotch border, where marauding bands swooped down, as the Douglas did against the Percies, a hundred armed citizens kept nightly watch upon the walls. London itself, except on the side towards the river, was still a walled town; the houses were chiefly of wood and timber; the streets, narrow and unpaved, sloped to a gutter or open sewer in the middle, foul with refuse; but the Thames was still clear and beautiful, and beyond the city gates lanes led the Londoners through fair meadows, where the tender spring green of the grass was starred by the daisies that Master Chaucer loved to greet and honor. A stone bridge, with houses built on either side of its

narrow roadway, connected Chaucer's London with Southwark on the opposite side of the Thames. At Southwark there were fields and gardens, and round wooden buildings for bear-baiting or cock-fighting; there, near the end of the bridge, was the old Tabard Inn, in whose square courtyard motley companies of pilgrims were wont to gather on their way to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury.

**The New Order.** — But this strange, picturesque, and narrow world of the Middle Ages was already near its end. Already the new world was beginning to push it aside. While Edward was founding a new order of chivalry, his Knights of the Garter (1344), a new instrument of destruction, the cannon, was being introduced into warfare which was to revolutionize the art of war. Before long this new invention, unimportant at first, was to shatter the solid masonry of the feudal castles and make the armor of the knight a useless encumbrance. Meanwhile the supremacy of the knight was threatened by a new power, the rising power of the English people. There are many signs of this. The battles in the Hundred Years' War are memorable not merely for their display of chivalric courage and courtesy, but also for the great part played in them by the people of England. The truly significant feature of these battles is indeed not the splendid spectacle of knightly gallantry; it is rather the effectiveness of the English yeomen, the archers whose "gray-goose shafts" did so much to turn the day at Crécy and Poitiers. It has been said that this national character of the English army, this triumph of the foot-soldier over cavalry, was "the death-knell of Feudalism."

**The Rise of the People.** — The popular spirit, asserting itself in unconscious rivalry or in open opposition

to the feudal power of king and barons, found at the same time a political expression in the establishment of the Commons as a separate branch of the Parliament. Beneath all the magnificence of the early part of Edward's reign, we see the transfer of the real power from the king to the people. Finally, in the "Good Parliament" of 1376, we find the "Commons" united against their feudal superiors, the Baronage and the King.

**The Black Death.** — Many things combined to produce a demand for liberty and equality among the people, but the chief causes of this popular uprising were probably the unsettled state of labor, and the bitter discontent and growing importance of the working-classes, which followed the successive visitations of a terrible plague called "The Black Death." It is difficult for us who live in a world made comparatively clean, comfortable, and decent to imagine the abject misery to which the English people were reduced by this loathsome and often fatal disease. The first of this awful series of pestilences reached England from southern Europe in 1348, two years after the brilliant victory of Crécy, and from that time until nearly the end of the century the land was desolated by periodical recurrences of the disease. The number of deaths was very great, for, besides those who died of the plague, many more perished miserably from want and hunger. Famine followed the pestilence, as some farms had been left untilled, some had but scanty crops, and on others, for want of laborers, the harvests rotted in the fields. The land was filled with vagrants, driven by illness and starvation to beggary or theft. The organization of labor was unsettled, and the very foundations of society seemed shaken. The people, thus laden with a burden that seemed almost too heavy to bear, were called upon

to pay a heavy tax to defray the cost of the French war. The poor were arrayed against the rich; they questioned and scoffed at the class distinctions that were so inseparable a part of the feudal society, and rose in armed revolt. The age of the courtly Froissart is thus also the age of a peasantry pushed forward by new economic conditions to fight against the old order of society. While the French chronicler celebrates the glories of Knighthood, the English people are singing the crude rhyme:

“ When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman? ”

**The New Democracy.** — This feeling found a spokesman in the revolutionary teachings of John Ball, “ the mad Priest of Kent.” Crowds gathered about Ball in the cloisters of Canterbury Cathedral, and “ many of the mean people loved him ” and affirmed that “ he saith truth.” Inside the great cathedral was the rich shrine of St. Thomas à Becket, the goal of many a medieval pilgrimage, but outside in the cloisters the voice of the preacher seems to be the voice of the modern world. “ What have we deserved, or why should we be kept thus in servage? We be all come from one father and mother, Adam and Eve: whereby can they say or show that they be greater lords than we be, saving by that they cause us to win and labor for that they dispose? They are clothed in velvet and camlet furred with grise, and we be vested with poor cloth; they have their wines, spices, and good bread, and we have the drawing out of the chaff and drink water; they dwell in fair houses, and we have the pain and travail, the rain and wind, in the fields; and by that that cometh of our labors they keep and maintain their

estates." Ball's teachings were socialistic: he declared that, "everything should be common;" and many, while they stopped short of this extreme, shared in his democratic feeling and in his demand for a social reform.

**Religion.** — In religion, too, we notice signs of a coming change. Medieval Christianity was still supreme; the Church was enormously wealthy and powerful; prelates dressed richly and lived in luxury; her services were splendid and impressive. In England Westminster Abbey was being enlarged; noble cathedrals were being erected; the great builder, *William of Wykeham*, was busy at Winchester. But the forces of disruption were already active. The Church no longer inspired that devotion which we find in the days of the earlier crusades. In 1309 the Pope removed from Rome to Avignon, and the reverence and awe with which he had been regarded were greatly lessened when men saw him made the political tool of the growing power of France. Englishmen resented the Pope's interference in the affairs of their kingdom; they refused (1366) to pay the tribute which England had paid the Pope since the reign of King John. The sale of pardons, and the multiplying corruptions and abuses in the Church, the sordidness and lack of spirituality in many of its clergy, moved earnest men to scorn and satire. The Church of the Middle Ages, like the feudalism of the Middle Ages, was shaken by the modern spirit, and the Reformation was at hand.

**The New Learning and the New Art.** — Although at Oxford and Cambridge, and among a large number of scholars, the old educational system and the scholasticism of the Middle Ages still prevailed, we find that learning too was undergoing a change. A "new learning" had already arisen in Italy; a liberation of the intellect had

already begun in which Chaucer himself shared. Twenty years before Chaucer's birth, *Dante*, the first supremely great poet since the classic writers of Greece and Rome, had died in exile at Ravenna, leaving behind him, in his *Divine Comedy*, the supreme expression in poetry of medieval Christendom. When Chaucer was a year old, *Petrarch*, poet and scholar, and the great pioneer in the new way of thinking and feeling, was crowned with laurel at Rome. *Boccaccio*, in the prose tales of his *Decamerone*, was describing the fresh and careless pleasure in love, laughter, and the beauty of this world, that was to characterize the Italy of the Renaissance. Art, too, guided by the same new impulse, was freeing itself from medieval restrictions. Sculpture was advancing in the work of such men as *Nicola Pisano* and *Ghiberti*; and in painting, *Giotto* (1276–1337) stands at the beginning of a new and mighty era in the history of art.

In England these social, religious, and intellectual changes, which marked the breaking up of the medieval and the beginning of the modern world, found expression in three great writers, WILLIAM LANGLAND, JOHN WYCLIF, and GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

#### LITERATURE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Literature in fourteenth-century England shows that diversity in language, that confusion of traditions and ideals, which characterized the time. When the century opened, London had not yet taken its place as the literary center of the nation; literature was still local, and writers of the north, south, or middle-west still used the dialect, or form of English, peculiar to their section. During the early half of the century there was some literary activity in the north, followed by a remarkable development of poetry in the West-Midland dis-

trict. In the latter half of the century, however, a greater unity developed, and a truly national literature began. The East-Midland form of English, the language of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, became of constantly increasing importance, especially in the writings of John Wyclif, of Chaucer, and of his fellow poet, the learned JOHN GOWER (1330-1408). With the establishing of Chaucer's reputation as a great poet in England, London became the literary capital of the whole people. There Chaucer was born, and there he lived. And from that time to this, from Chaucer to Shakespeare, from Shakespeare to Pope and Johnson, from Johnson to Carlyle, the scene of England's literary history is laid, for the most part; in the streets and theaters, the taverns, clubs, and coffee-houses of the city of London.

**Literature before Chaucer.** — During the first half of the fourteenth century several remarkable works were produced in the north, one of the old centers of Anglo-Saxon culture. RICHARD ROLLE, who returned from Oxford to live the life of a hermit at Hampole in Yorkshire, wrote a somber, distressful poem, *The Prick of Conscience* (about 1340), and contributed to the development of English prose. Near the Welsh border an unknown author wrote one of the most beautiful of English romances, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, (about 1370). He is supposed to have written also the famous elegy of *The Pearl*. But these authors wrote before literature in England had become truly national.

**Rise of English Prose.** — The fourteenth century was a period not only of new poetic achievement, but also of the development of prose. The work of King Alfred in behalf of a native prose literature in Old English times had been so effectually undone by the numerous foreign Churchmen who came into England after the

Norman Conquest, that, from the middle of the twelfth to the latter part of the fourteenth century, only a few specimens of native prose emerge from the great stream of Latin. English prose was much slower than English poetry in regaining its freedom, but by the end of the century it had made a decided advance. This advance was not due so much to any one writer as to the social, political, and religious condition of the realm. It was connected with the ever increasing importance of the English language, and it was nearly related to that rise of the people which is one of the great historic features of the time. Underneath the violence and clamor of the popular uprisings, men felt, if vaguely, the appearance of a new social force. The people were to be reckoned with, to be appealed to, argued with, persuaded; and to reach the people, the scholar must abandon Latin and the scholastic phrase, and address them in simple English prose.

**John Wyclif.** — This was the course adopted by JOHN WYCLIF (about 1324–1384), “the last of the Schoolmen, the first of the Protestant reformers,” and the most famous English scholar of his time. A man of strong and subtle intellect, he mastered the scholastic philosophy at Oxford. At a comparatively early age he was made Master of Balliol College, and he soon became prominent as a daring thinker and a skilful controversialist. At first, like the Schoolmen before him, he wrote in Latin; but if his language and manner were medieval, his spirit was modern. The new note of independence, the desire to examine into the basis of authority, sound in his works. He counseled England to refuse to pay the tribute demanded by the Pope. He opposed the interference of the Church in matters of state. As the controversy progressed,



Wyclif's position became more radical and revolutionary. Over against the authority of the Church and the priesthood, he set the authority of the Bible, and the right of every man to read it for himself.

**His Translation of the Bible.** — Such a position forced Wyclif to turn to the people; and to reach the people, the great scholar must abandon Latin and speak to them in a language all could understand. If the Bible was to be a guide for the individual conscience, it must be made the book of the people. About 1378, therefore, Wyclif, with the aid of Nicholas Herford and John Purvey, began to translate the entire Bible into English (completed 1383). Wyclif also sent out his followers, his "poor priests" as they were called, to spread his doctrines; while he himself spoke to the people in innumerable sermons and tracts, teaching them in plain and homely phrase. Memorable as these tracts and sermons are, the position of Wyclif's Bible in the history of English prose is probably even more important.

It is safe to say that the English translation of the Bible is the greatest monument of our prose literature. Its influence on prose literature has been incalculable. Many of the greatest masters of English prose have drawn from it as from a great storehouse, so that biblical illustrations and biblical phrases have been wrought into the very fabric of the literature. The style of our English Bible has a dignity, simplicity, and force that have seldom been approached and never excelled. Now the basis of the English Bible was Wyclif's translation. Later translators corrected, modernized, and improved upon his version; but Wyclif was not merely the pioneer, his work was the model for all that came after.

Wyclif was but one of a group of writers who were contributing to the development of English prose. Chaucer

belongs to this group, although his superiority as a poet makes his prose comparatively unimportant. One of the most famous prose works of the century was *The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, a translation from the French. This entertaining book purported to be an account of a journey to the Holy Land, but in reality is a medley, partly compiled from popular legends and travelers' stories, and partly pure invention.

**William Langland** (about 1332—about 1400), though coming originally, it is believed, from the border of Wales, belongs with the group of writers who helped to make London the literary center. In his great work, *The Vision of Piers the Plowman*, we seem to hear the well-nigh hopeless cry of the people against a corrupt church and the social evils of the time. The poet falls asleep and sees in his vision the world as a "fair field full of folk." There are plowmen, the fruit of whose toil the gluttons waste, men rich in apparel, chafferers, lawyers, who will not open their mouths except for gold, pardoners from Rome, who traffic with the people for pardons, and divide with the parish priest the silver of the poor. The world makes a pilgrimage to seek Truth, and finds a guide in Piers, a plowman, at work in the fields. He bids them wait until he has finished his half-acre, then he will lead them. By *Truth*, Langland appears to have meant a heavenly wisdom which should teach men how to live rightly, and it becomes plain as the poem proceeds that the way to truth is through humility, unfeigned goodness, and honest labor.

So far, in our general survey of the literature of the fourteenth century, we have considered some of its local manifestations in poetry, and the revival of English prose. We must now consider the most representative poet of the period.

## GEOFFREY CHAUCER

(ABOUT 1340 TO 1400)

"The pupil of manifold experience, — scholar, courtier, soldier, ambassador, — who had known poverty as a housemate, and been the companion of princes, he was one of those happy temperaments that could equally enjoy both halves of culture, — the world of books and the world of men." — LOWELL, *Essay on Chaucer*.

"His, to paint  
With Nature's freshness what before him lies:  
The knave, the fool: the frolicsome, the quaint:  
His the broad jest, the laugh without restraint,  
The ready tears, the spirit lightly moved;  
Loving the world and by the world beloved."

F. T. PALGRAVE, *Visions of England*.

Chaucer is the first-born of the greater poets of England; the predecessor of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the rest of the royal line of the English rulers of song. He was not indeed, as some of his earlier disciples ignorantly thought him, "the Father of English Poetry," for England, as we have seen, had produced a long succession of poets before his time; but he was the first great poet who wrote in an English which presents but little difficulty to the modern reader; he was "the finder of our fair language." Chaucer marks the point of departure from old precedents and traditions. If he is not "the Father of English Poetry," he is the founder of a new dynasty, the first exemplar in England of a poetry that in form and spirit was, in a large measure, neither Anglo-Saxon nor Celtic, but foreign. This departure on Chaucer's part from the older poetry was not a deliberate rejection of it, but a natural result of the poet's education and of all the varied experiences which combined to mold his genius and direct its course.

**Life.** — Chaucer was both a poet and a practical and sagacious man of affairs, both a student and a courtier, a dreamer and a man of the world. In studying his life we must endeavor to view it from this double aspect; to remember that he was the “pupil of manifold experience,” and that, while he lived and learned in the world of courts and camps, he withdrew at times into that other world of thought and imagination.

Geoffrey Chaucer was born in London in or about 1340. His father, John Chaucer, a prosperous wine-merchant on Thames Street, was purveyor to Edward III, and had attended the King and Queen in an expedition to Flanders and Cologne (1338). The name Chaucer, which seems to be derived from the French, suggests that the poet was sprung from Norman stock. These few facts are significant. The poet, who was to leave behind him such lively and brightly colored pictures of medieval life, dress, and manners, was born in the nation's capital, the focus of England's political, social, and commercial life. The narrow, crooked streets of the old town were a wonderful school for the painter of contemporary life, but the dweller in the London of the Plantagenets was not wholly cut off from the influence of very different surroundings. Chaucer was to be the lover of Nature as well as the poet of man; in medieval London the sky was not yet obscured by soot and smoke, and the open fields and the hedgerows were not very far away. Poet of Nature and of man, Chaucer was also to be the poet of the upper classes and the court, and the conditions of his life led him naturally to this likewise.

**Page to Countess of Ulster.** — When Chaucer was about seventeen, he was made page to Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster, the daughter-in-law of Edward III, and

this early introduction to the court atmosphere is a crucial point in his career. While the native English spirit was beginning to assert itself throughout the country, the tone of the court at this time was still foreign. French literature was in fashion: "French poets and 'menestrels' were in the service and pay of the English King." Queen Philippa and her ladies amused themselves with French poetry and romance. It was a brilliant, comfortable world too, adorned with a splendid ceremonial, stirred by the echo of chivalric deeds, for the King had just won the battle of Poitiers (1356). At an age when life is very new and wonderful to an eager and susceptible youth, the boy-poet Chaucer was transported to the midst of this foreign atmosphere, this little world of fair ladies and great lords, of French singers and French tastes. Outside in the country was the greater world of England, a plague-stricken and miserable land where the people toiled and hungered, enduring "wind and rain in the fields." But circumstances had shut the young Chaucer away from this world of the poor; his training was that of a gentleman's son; his world, the world of chivalry.

**Chaucer the Student.** — Besides this courtly training and worldly experience, Chaucer gained in some way a knowledge of books. He learned Latin, and he was probably familiar with French from his earliest years. Like Shakespeare he was a lover not only of men but of books; and, possessing the industry and enthusiasm of the student, he was doubtless his own best teacher. His poems are almost always founded upon books; many of them are translations or paraphrases of other men's work, and he is fond of introducing reminiscences of his reading. More than one passage reveals his delight in study, and shows us that in the midst of a

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**Geoffrey Chaucer**  
 From a picture in the National Portrait Gallery



busy life he turned to books for rest and refreshment. Sad and wakeful he turns —

“To rede, and drive the night away;”

preferring his romance to a game “at chesse or tables.” He tells us that when he was busy in the London Custom House, after he had finished his day’s work, instead of seeking rest and diversion, he would go home and sit over a book as “dombe as any stoon.” The character and scope of Chaucer’s reading were such as his training and opportunities would lead us to expect. He was a child of foreign influences. Trained in a court where the King could hardly speak an intelligible English sentence, Chaucer’s literary inheritance was not English but Latin and French. He studied the Latin literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; he knew Vergil’s *Æneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and he had some acquaintance with other classical works. But his mother-literature was the French. He read the long French poem, the *Romance of the Rose*; he was influenced by the lyrics of his French contemporaries, so that, when he began to write, addressing, as he did, a courtly audience whose sympathies were French, he naturally followed the French manner.

**In the French War, 1359.** — But reading and poetry formed but part of Chaucer’s eventful and many-sided career. Before he was twenty he saw something not only of the court but of the camp and of the field, for he was with the English army in the French campaign of 1359. While this campaign was marked by no brilliant military exploits, there must have been much to stir the imagination. In those days war was magnificent with that “pomp and panoply” in which poets delight, and Chaucer saw with his bodily eyes such



spectacles as poets dream of. As the King's host moved through France, says Froissart, it seemed to cover the country, and the soldiers "were so richly armed and appareled that it was a wonder and a great pleasure to look at the shining arms, the floating banners." And in this mighty army were the King, the Black Prince, and many of the greatest knights and captains of the age. Chaucer learned something too of war's reverses, for he was taken prisoner by the French and ransomed by the King for £16. After his return from the French campaign, Chaucer entered the King's service. In 1367 he was granted a pension of twenty marks as "valet of the King's chamber," and somewhat later he rose to the position of *esquire*. Before 1379 he had been employed in no less than seven diplomatic missions to various places on the Continent.

**Early Poems.** — While Chaucer was thus making his way as courtier, soldier, and diplomatist, he had already begun his work as a poet. He wrote love-lyrics in the French manner, most of which have been lost. He translated the *Romance of the Rose* (1360–65?). One of his early poems, *The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse* (1369), was called forth by the death of Blanche of Lancaster, the wife of John of Gaunt, the poet's patron. The love of Nature, in her milder and fairer aspects, — of the soft grass, the birds, the flowers, and the green woods, — and a deep and reverent appreciation of the beauty of womanhood, these two traits so characteristic of Chaucer's maturer work, are already apparent in this poem. It is here that we find that melodious and charming description of happy girlhood, which takes its place beside the work of the great masters:

"I saw hir daunce so comlily,  
Carole and singe so swetely

Laughe and pleye so womanly,  
And loke so debonairly,  
So goodly speke and so frendly,  
That certes, I trow that evermore  
Nas seyn so blisful a tresore."

Meanwhile — the exact date is not known — Chaucer had married a lady whose first name was Philippa. This lady is supposed to have been Philippa Roch, a sister of the third wife of John of Gaunt.

**First Visit to Italy, 1372.** — The King and his advisers appear to have found Chaucer a trustworthy and competent agent, for in 1372 he was sent on a diplomatic mission to Italy. He was abroad nearly a year, visiting Florence and Genoa, and possibly meeting the Italian poet Petrarch, who was staying near Padua at the time. This journey to Italy, and a subsequent visit to Lombardy (1378–79), had a profound effect upon the development of Chaucer's genius. He passed from his northern island into that wonderful land of the south, once the mistress of the civilized world; from the land of mailed knights, to the land of the artist and the scholar; from the old world of the *trouvère*, to the new world of Petrarch and Boccaccio. In the midst of the fragments of an old civilization, there were already signs of the awakening of a new art and culture. The devotion to beauty, characteristic of the coming era, showed itself in wonders of architecture, in paintings and frescoes; a new literature, inspired by enthusiasm for the masterpieces of antiquity, had already declared itself. Chaucer was the first great poet of England to feel that spell which Italy has exercised over so many English writers from Shakespeare to Browning. His work testifies to the profound impression made upon him by his Italian journeys. In his literary apprenticeship he is the imitator and trans-

lator of the French poets; then, brought close to another descendant of the same Latin civilization, he draws a fresh inspiration from Italy.

**Return to England.** — After his return to England from this memorable first visit to Italy (1373), Chaucer received various marks of the Royal favor. He was made Comptroller of the Customs on Wool and Hides for the Port of London, granted a pension by John of Gaunt, and sent from time to time on missions to France and elsewhere. In 1382 he became Comptroller of the Petty Customs at London, and in 1386 he was returned to Parliament as one of the Knights of the Shire for Kent. About this time (1385–88), Chaucer may have actually gone upon a pilgrimage to Canterbury, and found in his experience a hint for the setting of his *Canterbury Tales*.

**Troilus and Cressida.** — But Chaucer, like Shakespeare, possessed the rare power of keeping the ideal and the practical side of life in an even balance, and during these active and prosperous years study and poetry were not neglected. Shut in his house at Aldgate he lived in a world of imagination and reminiscence. "There," writes M. Jusserand, "all he had known in Italy would return to his memory, campaniles, azure frescoes, olive groves, sonnets of Petrarch, poems of Dante, tales of Boccaccio; he had brought back wherewithal to move and enliven 'merry England' herself." A number of poems bear the impress of his Italian studies. A long and important poem, *Troilus and Cressida* (about 1380–1383?), is based on Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, while the uncompleted *House of Fame* shows the influence of Dante. In his masterly version of the story of Troilus, the lover, and the beautiful but faithless Cressida, Chaucer is the precursor of the modern novelist. The chief characters are drawn with a subtle

understanding of men and women; and, though something of the lengthy tediousness of the old romance still remains, the story is told with a consummate delicacy and skill that make it worthy of a great master of English narrative verse.

**Chaucer Becomes Poor, 1386.** — But a change in Chaucer's fortunes was at hand. So far his success as a courtier had given him many opportunities which proved of advantage to him in his art. He had learned from prosperity, he was now to feel the discipline of another teacher. In 1386, the same year in which he had entered Parliament, he was suddenly reduced to comparative poverty. Edward III, who had done so much for Chaucer, had died some years before this; and, during the minority of Richard II, now one and now another of the young King's uncles gained the chief power. Chaucer was among those who lost their government positions as a result of this political change. Among Chaucer's minor poems is a group of ballads in which he meditates upon the fickleness of Fortune, upon contentment in adversity, on the vanity of wealth without nobleness, and on kindred themes. It is highly probable that we have in these poems an indication of the spirit in which Chaucer met his misfortunes. The tone of these ballads is brave, sensible, and manly; they bring before us a man of sweet and kindly nature, sustained by religion, philosophy, and a sense of humor, who is able to take "fortune's buffets and rewards" with "equal thanks." "No man," he says, "is wretched unless he chooses to think himself so,"

"And he that hath himself hath sufficiency."

The little poem the *Ballad of Good Counseil, or Truth*, seems to bring Chaucer very close to us:

"Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stall!  
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of all;  
Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost thee lede:  
And trouthe shal delivere, it is no drede."

**The Canterbury Tales.** — In these years of financial stress and "litel besinesse" Chaucer is supposed to have turned his leisure to good account and found "rest" in composing the greater part of his *Canterbury Tales*



The "Tabard" Inn, Southwark

(1386-91?), the crowning work of his life. The *Canterbury Tales* consists of a number of separate stories supposed to be told by the various members of a company of pilgrims, journeying together to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. In a general prologue we are told how these pilgrims met at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, the district opposite to London on the other side of the Thames; how they agreed to be fellow-travelers; how the jolly inn-keeper, "Harry

Bailly," proposed that each pilgrim should tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two returning. There are, by way of interlude, prologues to the several stories thus told, which bind the whole series more firmly together and recall to us the general design.

Chaucer's work is founded on a pilgrimage, one of the characteristic and familiar features of the life of the time. With rare tact he has selected one of the few occasions which brought together in temporary good-fellowship men and women of different classes and occupations. He is thus able to paint the moving life of the world about him in all its breadth and variety; he can give to stories told by such chance-assorted companions a dramatic character and contrast, making Knight, Priest, or Miller reveal himself in what he relates.

The chief interest of the Prologue lies in the freshness and truth with which each member of the little party of pilgrims is set before us. As one after another of that immortal procession passes by, the intervening centuries are forgotten, and we ourselves seem fourteenth-century pilgrims riding with the rest. It is a morning in the middle of April as we with the jolly company, thirty-two in all, with our host of the Tabard, Harry Bailly, as "governor," pass out of the square courtyard of the inn and take the highroad toward Canterbury. The freshness of the spring is all about us; showers and sunshine and soft winds have made the budding world beautiful in tender green, and the joy of the sweet season in the hearts of innumerable birds makes them put their gladness into song. This time, when the sap mounts in the trees, and the world is new-charged with the love of life, fills us with restless desires and the spirit of adventure:

"Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages."

Our little company is made up of men and women of many sorts and conditions. Chivalry is represented by the *Knight* and the *Squire*. The Knight has been in fifteen battles, but he is plainly dressed, for he is modest and brave. The young Squire, on the other hand, with his curled hair and embroidered dress, is as fresh as the month of May. The Knight has a single attendant, dressed in the green of the forester, and bearing a mighty bow. Various typical personages suggest the *ecclesiastical* life of the time. There is a coy and smiling Prioress, who affects court manners; a fat Monk, a begging Friar, and a Parish Priest, faithful and patient. Law, medicine, and learning, too, as well as many of the humbler trades or occupations, have their representatives. Last of all is the poet himself, noting with twinkling eyes every trick of costume, and looking through all to the soul beneath. In this truly wonderful group the moving and varied life of Chaucer's England survives in all its bloom and freshness, in the vital power of its intense humanity. Student of books as Chaucer was, and teller of old tales, we see here and elsewhere the shrewd observer and interpreter of life and character, the man with the poet's gift of fresh and independent vision.

As we have said, the several stories in the *Canterbury Tales* are dramatic studies as well as masterpieces of narrative, as each narrator unconsciously reveals something of his own character in the tale he tells. Thus the *Knight's Tale* is steeped in the golden atmosphere of chivalry, and the gorgeous description of the tournament sparkles and glitters with the luster of that romantic and knightly world. Yet the "Knight's Tale" is not wholly medieval. The luxurious beauty of the description of the temple of Venus seems to breathe the spirit of beautiful and pagan

Italy. The Knight takes us into his world of the gentles; so the drunken Miller, a consummate example of obtuse vulgarity, brutally strong and big of brawn and bones, incidentally acquaints us with life as he knows it; while the dainty Prioress, speaking from her sheltered nook of pious meditation, tells her tender story of a miracle.

Among the most beautiful of the tales are those told by the Clerk and the Man of Law, two stories that in some respects may be placed together. Both reveal Chaucer's deep reserve of gentleness and compassion; both reveal his reverential love of goodness; both bring before us, as the central figure, a patient and holy woman, unjustly treated and bearing all wrongs and griefs with meek submission.

In the Middle Ages it was not customary to invent new plots, and Chaucer, like many another poet, translated or adapted old stories gathered from many sources — French, Italian, or Latin. Critics have discovered the sources of many of the *Canterbury Tales*, and it is quite possible that none of them was entirely original with Chaucer. But Chaucer, the teller of the *Canterbury Tales*, was not an imitator or translator, but a new creative force. Chaucer's originality became more pronounced as his genius matured. As we read his masterpieces we feel that he painted from life, and that, whether he borrowed from France or from Italy, he made a style of his own, breathing into it the breath of his own spirit.

**Chaucer's Last Years.** — On the accession of Henry IV in 1399, the son of Chaucer's old patron, John of Gaunt, the poet's fortunes again improved. Chaucer lost no time in bringing his poverty to the notice of the King, by sending him a humorous little poem, the *Complaint of his Empty Purse*. It was evidently in response to this appeal that Henry promptly granted a pension of forty marks a year to his father's old protégé. But



Chaucer had nearly done with pensions and Court favor. He died on the 25th of October, 1400.

**Chaucer the Flower of Two Civilizations.** — Chaucer's relation to literary history has been already indicated. Through him those foreign influences which for three centuries had been enriching the civilization of England found expression in English poetry. Ignorant of the poetry of the Anglo-Saxon, Chaucer's work marks a final break with the literary traditions native to the English people. Not only is he un-English in manner, but he also has a lightness of touch, an easy cheerfulness, grace, and humor, very different from the somber earnestness and ponderous strength of the Anglo-Saxon. He is indeed sensitive to suffering, quickly touched by the sadness "in mortal things;" but, like a light-hearted child, he turns away from this aspect of life with relief. In his own phrase, he is "so weary for to speke of sorwe." Arcite, in the *Knight's Tale*, dies in the strength of his youth, and Chaucer accepts the fact with characteristic philosophy. It is tragic, but why should we cry over spilt milk? Can he thank us if we make ourselves miserable? "Nay, God woot, never a del." Let his rival and sworn brother be sensible. Why should he wish to die also? has he not "gold enough and Emely?" In such passages there is an avoidance of painful reflection, a Gallic gaiety foreign to the natural bent of the Teutonic mind.

But we must not think of Chaucer as a mere transmitter, or Anglicizer of foreign influences. His genius had another side. He chooses to write in the English language, while his contemporary, John Gower, composes the greater part of his poetry in Latin and in French. If Chaucer began by translating French romance, he became before he died the great painter

of the contemporary life of England. His foot was firmly planted on English soil, and few poets of any age have surpassed him in his power to observe and reproduce the external aspects of the world around him. His genius is objective; he has a strong grasp of plain fact. He has no touch of morbid grief or of maudlin sentimentality. He hates shams; he is eminently frank, robust, and wholesome. Dryden called him "a perpetual fountain of good sense." Now in these things Chaucer seems essentially English. In his frank realism, his appreciation of human nature, he resembles Shakespeare and Scott; his broad humor, free from malice or restraint, suggests the robust presence and hearty laughter of Fielding. Chaucer, then, is neither Norman nor Saxon, but a mixture of both. He united the Norman spirit of romance with English solidity and common sense. His very language, a fusion of French and English, shows that in him a long process of amalgamation is nearly completed, and that once separate elements are being welded into one.

**Chaucer and the Renaissance.** — Nor must we forget that Italy, as well as France and England, contributed to the full development of Chaucer's powers. Dante, the first great poet of modern Europe, stands at the end of the Middle Ages: Chaucer, born three quarters of a century later, stands at once at the close of the medieval and at the beginning of the modern world. The inheritance of the past and the promise of the future mingle in his work; and, like his century, he marks both the end of an old order and the beginning of a new.

**His Genius.** — Genius is often associated with the excessive or abnormal development of a single faculty. In such cases one side of the man's nature grows at the expense of the rest. From this besetting weakness of

genius, Chaucer is conspicuously free. The artist in him did not warp or spoil the man; the varied life of the man contributed to the triumph of the artist. Perhaps the most remarkable fact about Chaucer is his ability to keep each of the diverse elements that make up life in its proper place, and his ability to use all, while he prevented any one from gaining an undue ascendancy. Chaucer's healthy contact with life and his marvelous equipoise of character give a sane, wholesome, normal quality to his work. He is truthful, setting down what he sees honestly and naturally; he can enjoy life with almost the frank delight of a child, capable of laughter without malice; and, boisterous or coarse as he may sometimes seem, he is at heart surprisingly gentle and compassionate. If he is the poet of the Wife of Bath, he is also the poet of Griselda and Constance. He reveres a good woman; he writes of little children with a wonderful tenderness. He is not bitter, rebellious, or complaining, but accepts what life gives him with a cheerful courage and manly resignation. There is something natural, almost childlike, in his delight in birds and grass, in flowers and sunshine, in "Maytime and the cheerful dawn." He is among the greatest comic writers; the father of English humor, he has a Shakespearian sympathy with the follies or the absurdities which he describes.

**The Music of His Verse.** — When Chaucer wrote, our English language, with its more frequent vowel sounds, was softer and smoother in men's mouths, and Chaucer, the master of this melodious English, is one of the most musical of English poets. When we compare the line,

"And smale fowles maken melodie,"

with

"And the small birds make melody,"

or some such modern equivalent, we see that the English of Chaucer's day, as he used it, could rival the liquid flow of the Italian.

**His Narrative Skill.** — Chaucer added to these varied gifts the power of telling a story in a clear, rapid, and effective manner. He was a great narrative, as well as an excellent descriptive, poet. He could reveal his characters through action, interest us in their adventures, and bring before us striking scenes or situations with vividness and dramatic force.

**Poet of the Court.** — With all this comprehensive excellence, there were aspects of life that Chaucer touched lightly or ignored. He pictures men and women of various social conditions, from the knight to the miller and the plowman, but he shows breadth of observation rather than breadth of sympathy for the miseries or wrongs of the poor. The laureate of the Court, something of the courtier clings to him, and he remains the poet of a feudal society, the outcome of the voice of chivalry in its class distinctions and exclusiveness, as well as its splendor. His easy-going nature has in it no touch of the reformer, the martyr, or the fanatic. He takes the world as it is; he loves the good, but the sight of the evil stirs in him no deeps of moral indignation; on the contrary, he often regards grossness and vulgarity with an amused tolerance. He painted medieval life in its outward aspects, while Dante, revealing its soul, probed to the center. He seems to dwell at his ease in his broad, sunshiny world of green fields and merry jests; but if he took life and its graver issues lightly, this buoyant good-humor is not only his limitation but also his enduring charm.

## IMPORTANT DATES

EDWARD I, who greatly furthered national unity	1272-1307
EDWARD II	1307-1327
Scottish Victory at Bannockburn	1314
EDWARD III	1327-1377
RICHARD ROLLE writes in the north of England <i>The Prick of Conscience</i>	about 1340
Beginning of the Hundred Years' War with France	1338
Battle of Crécy (gunpowder first used)	1346
Battle of Poitiers (won under the leadership of Edward the Black Prince)	1356
LAWRENCE MINOT's poems on the Wars of Edward III.	about 1352
The Black Death first appears in England	1348-1349
<i>Sir Gawayne and the Greene Knight</i>	} In the west of .. { about 1370 England .. { about 1370
<i>The Pearl</i>	
John Ball, the Mad Priest of Kent, executed	1381
JOHN WYCLIF, the Herald of the Reformation	1324-1384
His translation of the Bible completed	1383
GEOFFREY CHAUCER	1340?-1400
Begins poetical work	probably 1360
<i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	after 1386

## FOREIGN DATES

Petrarch	1304-1374
Boccaccio	1313-1375
Froissart, author of the <i>Chronicles</i> (of the Hundred Years' War),	1337-1410

## II. THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

### CHAPTER I

#### I. THE RENAISSANCE IN EUROPE

WHEN Chaucer died in 1400, Europe had already entered upon an era of change which produced a deep and lasting effect upon her civilization. Men were beginning to turn away from the life, the thought, and the ideals, that had satisfied them during the Middle Ages, and to look at life and the world about them in a different spirit. Men, and especially great men, were exhilarated by wonderful discoveries, and stirred to enthusiasm by contact with new ideas. Great things were being done, and Europe was full of excitement and anticipation. Italy and the other leading nations seemed renewed, or recreated, as by a fresh flood of life and inspiration, and hence this period is known as the *Renaissance*, that is the time when civilization seemed to be born again. This great movement began in Italy so early as the fourteenth century and spread from there throughout Europe. England was late in responding to the new impulse, and the fifteenth century was almost over before the Renaissance in England had fairly begun. Before we speak of the reasons for this, or sketch the course of literature in England during the period after Chaucer's death, we must glance at some of the great events which were transforming Europe at this time, and try to understand more definitely what the Renaissance really means.

**The Revival of Learning.** — One great factor in this rebirth, or awakening, of Europe, was the enthusiastic study of Greek and Roman literature and art. Ever since the fall of the Roman Empire a thousand years before, Europe had known and cared little for the pagan civilization of classic times. During the Middle Ages, indeed, a few Latin authors were read by scholars, and some of the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle were studied in translation. But, with a few exceptions, even the wisest men were ignorant of the Greek language, and all the beautiful world of the Greeks, with its masterpieces of art, poetry, and philosophy, was either altogether forgotten or at best but dimly seen and understood. A great stimulus was given to the intellectual and artistic life of Europe when the achievements of this old classic civilization, so long ignored, began once more to be studied and enjoyed. Then came, as some one has said, "the meeting of the ancient and the modern mind." Europe came suddenly into a great inheritance: she discovered and took possession of the priceless treasures of her splendid past. The thoughts, the art, the ideals of a world long dead and out of mind, sprang to life and became again a power in the world. This was the *revival of learning*.

Italy, which in former times had been the center of culture as well as the ruler of the civilized world, was the first to reclaim this forgotten knowledge. In the fourteenth century, *Francis Petrarch* (1304–1374), a finished poet and an enthusiastic scholar, led the way in the study of the classics. Petrarch, while he did much to promote the study of the Latin classics, knew little Greek, but he was alive with the new spirit, and he inspired others with his enthusiasm for antiquity. The knowledge of Greek, though lost to Europe, survived

in Constantinople, the old capital of the eastern division of the Roman Empire, and towards the end of the fourteenth century Greek was taught in Italy by a scholar who came from Constantinople. By the fifteenth century many Italians were studying Greek with eagerness. After the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, many Greeks took refuge in Italy and helped to bring the old learning to men already waiting to receive it.

**The Revival of Art.** — While literature and learning, helped forward by the discovery of the old culture, were thus advancing in Italy, architecture, painting, and sculpture were transformed as by a fresh inspiration. In the thirteenth century, *Nicola of Pisa*, or *Nicola Pisano*, and his son *Giovanni*, led the way to a great era in sculpture: while *Cimabue* (1240–1302) and his greater pupil *Giotto* (1276–1337) were the precursors of the greatest age of painting the world had yet seen. The fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are glorious in the history of the world's art. This period includes *Raphael* (1485–1520), *Michael Angelo* (1474–1564), architect, poet, and painter, as well as the greatest sculptor of the modern world, and others hardly less famous. This astounding revival of art, this love of beauty, was not confined to Italy. For instance, the Netherlands, where the art of painting in oils had been discovered, produced *Rubens* (1577–1640) and *Rembrandt* (1607–1669); Germany was represented by *Hans Holbein* (d. 1543) and *Albert Dürer* (1471–1528); and Spain by *Murillo* (1617–1682) and *Velasquez* (1599–1660).

**Voyages and Discoveries.** — While Italy was thus revealing new worlds of beauty and knowledge, the daring sailors of Portugal and Spain were giving Europe fresh fields for action and adventure. All through the



Middle Ages little or no curiosity had been shown about the regions which lay beyond the boundaries of the known world, and the educated Europeans of the fourteenth century knew little more about the distant parts of the earth than the educated Romans had known a thousand years before. But in the fifteenth century, while art and learning were rapidly advancing in Italy, Portugal began to explore those vast regions of the earth that had been so long neglected and unknown. These explorations were due to the energy and perseverance of one man, *Prince Henry of Portugal* (1394–1460), who won for himself the name of Prince Henry the Navigator. In the early part of the fifteenth century, expeditions sent out by Prince Henry made various discoveries, but in the latter part, through the impulse he had given to exploration, discoveries were made which changed the course of history. In 1486, *Diaz*, a Portuguese, discovered the Cape of Good Hope. A little later Spain began to take part in the work of exploration and conquest. She furnished *Christopher Columbus*, an Italian navigator, with ships and men, and in 1492 he showed Europe the way to a new world in the west. Five years later a Portuguese explorer, *Vasco da Gama*, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and discovered a new road to India. The passion for exploration spread to England. In 1497, the year of the great voyage of *Vasco da Gama*, *Giovanni Cabotto*, or *John Cabot*, as the English called him, a Venetian who had settled in England, discovered the mainland of North America. It is hard for us to imagine the excitement aroused throughout Europe by these and other discoveries. One marvel followed quickly after another, and in less than half a century man learned more about the world in which he dwelt than he had done in thousands of years before.

**Printing.** — In the fifteenth century, while the Italians were widening the mind and refining the taste of Europe, and while the Portuguese were enlarging men's ideas and arousing their curiosity in regard to the hidden wonders of the earth, the art of printing was invented, perhaps in Holland, and perfected in Germany by *Gutenberg*. Thus while Europe was alive with new ideas, a means was supplied for their more general diffusion. The invention of printing dates from about the middle of the fifteenth century.

**The Reformation.** — The Renaissance, using the word in its widest sense, was also an era of spiritual restlessness and religious change. Early in the sixteenth century Germany became the center of that protest against certain practices and doctrines in the Church, which is known as the Reformation. During the Middle Ages, when book-learning was almost entirely confined to the clergy, the mass of the people had accepted just what the Church taught them without doubt or question. But towards the close of the Middle Ages a new spirit gained ground. Men began to think and to investigate for themselves. They were moreover disturbed at the scandals and abuses which prevailed in the Church at that time. The invention of printing greatly contributed to the spread of these new ideas. The Bible was translated so that plain unlearned men and women could read it for themselves. *Luther*, the great German reformer, braved Pope and Cardinal with the words: "Here I stand, Martin Luther: I cannot do otherwise, God help me." Thus, the Renaissance became not merely an intellectual, but also a spiritual rebirth. In Italy it was mainly literary and artistic, in Germany it was largely religious; in Italy, men strove to create and enjoy beauty; in Germany, Holland,

England, and France they were absorbed in questions of conscience and of belief.

**The Copernican Theory of Astronomy.** — Meanwhile, in the midst of all the stir and excitement aroused by changing conditions and novel ideas, man's fundamental conceptions of the physical universe were disturbed or transformed by the astronomical theory of the Prussian astronomer *Copernicus* (1473–1543). By this theory, the earth, which men had been accustomed to think of as the center of creation, was shown to be but a satellite, revolving, like the other planets, around the central sun. Thus, less than half a century after the discovery of Columbus had forced men to adopt new views of the earth's surface, they were asked to see the whole system of creation with different eyes. The book in which Copernicus put forth his ideas was published in 1543, and while it was some time before his theory was generally accepted, the publication of so radical and daring a view marked the beginning of a new intellectual epoch in Europe.

**Summary.** — All these and many other great events and discoveries worked together to rouse the nations of Europe to an extraordinary activity. But these events and discoveries, these splendid achievements in art and literature, important as was their influence on Europe, were not themselves the primary cause of the Renaissance. They were rather the result of a change in the spirit of Europe, a sign that the leaders in thought and action had outgrown the restrictions of the Middle Ages, and that they were feeling their way towards a new stage of intellectual development. The men of the Renaissance accomplished new things because they had new ambitions, because they had come to look at life and at the purpose of life in a new way. The Renais-

sance had its darker as well as its brighter side, and it must be admitted that these new ideas about life brought many evils and abuses in their train. The holy men of the Middle Ages thought of this world as a place of trial and discipline, they looked upon pleasure and beauty as temptations, and they believed that we must suffer and deny ourselves in this life in order to fit ourselves for the life to come. But with the Renaissance there came a great reaction towards a purely pagan way of feeling. The typical men of the Renaissance, keenly alive to the joy and beauty of the world, believed, like the old Greeks, in getting all the pleasure they could out of this life on earth. In time, unbelief and the unchecked love of pleasure corrupted the splendid art of Italy. On the other hand, the fullness and intensity with which men entered into life, the violence of their emotions, their passionate love of the beautiful, and the variety of their interests, helped to make this one of the great eras in the world's history.

## II. THE COMING OF THE RENAISSANCE TO ENGLAND

England was slow to respond to the spirit of the Renaissance. It is true that so early as the latter part of the fourteenth century Chaucer was inspired by the beauty and culture of Italy, while his contemporary, Wyclif, in his independence of thought and his daring attacks upon existing evils, was a pioneer of the Reformation. But Chaucer and Wyclif were exceptional men, and it took a long while for the new impulse to touch the whole nation. Chaucer had been in his grave for nearly a hundred years before the new learning really gained a foothold in England: and another hundred years had almost passed before the Renaissance found its fullest and highest expression in English literature.

The slow progress of the Renaissance in England was due to a variety of causes. Among them was the unquiet state of the people, and the preoccupation of many of the great nobles with war or intrigue. For eighty-five years after Chaucer's death, or until the accession of Henry VII in 1485, a large part of England's strength was spent in domestic strife or foreign war. Henry IV, who was on the throne when the fifteenth century opened, was a usurper, and he was threatened with secret plots and open rebellion. His successor, the heroic Henry V, renewed the war with France. This war, after a brilliant beginning, dragged on until nearly the middle of the century. About ten years after the close of the war with France a brutal struggle for the throne was begun between the rival families of York and Lancaster, and from this time to the reign of Henry VII the land had but little rest from plots and civil strife. These wars between two ambitious factions were called the *Wars of the Roses* (1455-1485), and perhaps it is partly this romantic name which leads us to think of these bloody and selfish quarrels as more noble and heroic than they really were. The truth is that the rival Kings and their followers were fighting not for England, but for themselves. Never before had the English nobles so disgraced themselves by treachery and falsehood. Brother broke faith with brother, and leaders deserted to the enemy on the very eve of battle. A depraved aristocracy, absorbed in fighting and intrigue, had little time or inclination to become patrons of art and literature. Several of the great nobles, who did take an interest in scholarship in spite of the distractions of the time, and who were exerting their influence to bring in the Italian culture, came to untimely deaths in the midst of their labors.

Other things besides war helped to delay the advance of the English Renaissance. After Wyclif's death, the University of Oxford sank into a dullness and inactivity which lasted nearly a hundred years. The spirit of progress which Wyclif had aroused there was arbitrarily suppressed; the number of her students declined; she produced no great scholars; and did little to give fresh enthusiasm to learning until the century was nearly at an end.

Literature like learning was in need of a fresh inspiration. There were poets, among them THOMAS OCCLEVE (about 1370—about 1450), and JOHN LYDGATE (about 1370—1451), who took Chaucer for their master. But these poets fell far short of their great model. They lacked originality, and the imitation of a great master by a writer of inferior powers cannot, at best, be more than a moderate success. The ablest of these followers of Chaucer were in Scotland, where for a hundred years or more the Scotch poets surpassed their English rivals. Early in the fourteenth century the Scotch had regained their political independence under their heroic leader Robert Bruce. The north of Scotland, or the Highlands, was at this time, and for long after, a wild and turbulent region, inhabited by a number of different Celtic tribes, or clans; but the southern part, or the Lowlands, was more civilized. In the southeastern portion of the Lowlands, from Edinburgh to the English border, the people were largely of English descent. It was this more civilized district of Scotland that became the center of Scottish literature, and it is from this section that nearly all of the great writers of Scotland have come. While the Highlanders spoke their native Gaelic, the people in Edinburgh and in the beautiful region to the south of the capital spoke English as their

fathers had done before them, and of course the Lowland poets wrote in English likewise. This English differed somewhat from that of Chaucer, as it was derived from that form or dialect of English spoken in the north.

**James I.** — The earliest notable follower of Chaucer in Scotland was her knightly and cultured ruler, KING JAMES I (1394–1437). This prince fell into the hands of the English King when he was a boy of twelve, and was held a prisoner for the next eighteen years. The young prince loved music and poetry, he read Chaucer and Gower, and he returned to his own Kingdom in 1424 with his tastes formed on these English models. His best known poem, *The King's Quair* (or Book), is supposed to tell the story of its royal author's love for Lady Jane Beaufort, his future bride.

**Dunbar.** — The greatest of these Scotch poets was WILLIAM DUNBAR (1460?–1520). In his youth Dunbar was a traveling friar of the Order of St. Francis, but he afterwards drifted to the Scottish Court and became a pensioner of King James IV. He was a coarse but vigorous writer, a merciless satirist, and a master of the horrible and the grotesque. His *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* is full of a strange gloom and power. Yet there is a gentler side to his genius. He loved Nature, and some of his poems have a strain of melancholy and pathos.

**Songs and Ballads.** — In studying this early literature, we must never forget that almost all the conditions of life in those days were very different from those in later times. Printing, as we shall see, was not introduced into England until late in the fifteenth century. There were no newspapers, no magazines. The medieval world was a world without books in our modern sense,

and this fact alone will help us to realize the wide difference between those early days and our own. We can imagine how much time and labor were required to make a neat copy of a learned treatise or a long poem, and we cannot wonder that manuscript volumes were scarce and often very costly. There were precious manuscripts at the monasteries, the universities, and in the libraries of some of the nobles or the wealthy, but the people, as a whole, were without books altogether. In the fourteenth century Chaucer's *Clerk*, whose whole mind was given to learning, evidently thought that a library of twenty books was a great possession, and we are told of a gentleman who, shortly before the introduction of printing, had succeeded in collecting thirty volumes. The large majority of the population could neither read nor write; they could not afford to own books, and they were unable to use them. But while the plain people, the plowmen and the milkmaids, the sailors, carpenters, and weavers, lived without books, they did not live without literature in the widest sense of the word. Indeed, there were those who, while they could not read, yet cared more for poetry than thousands do now among those that we call educated. While poets like Chaucer and his followers wrote for the Court and for the rich and noble, the people had poets and a poetry of their own. They had their songs, composed perhaps by some rustic and now forgotten poet, or handed down from the distant past, and men and women sang at their work, children sang at their play, or the youths and maidens sang in the long twilight as they danced on the village green. It was long before this love of song entirely died out among the people. In the sixteenth century Shakespeare speaks of women chanting an old and simple song



as they sit spinning or knitting in the sunshine. In the seventeenth, Milton, in his cheerful description of a summer morning in the country, shows us the milkmaid singing at daybreak, and the plowman whistling as he bends over his furrow. Even so late as the eighteenth century, Robert Burns, a farmer's boy in Scotland, composed two of his best poems while he was plowing.

Such allusions or incidents, slight as they are, help us to see that even long after books came into general use, singing and sometimes the making of songs was part of the people's everyday life. And besides these short songs the people had their stories in verse or in prose. Sir Philip Sidney, the pattern of noble knight-hood in Queen Elizabeth's time, says that the stories told or sung by the poets were so delightful that children stayed away from their play to listen to them, and old men left their comfortable nook in the chimney corner. Milton pictures the village rustics after a day's merry-making, telling stories of fairies and goblins over the "nut-brown ale." Among all this mass of popular song and legend were those stories in verse, sung, or at least adapted to singing, which we commonly call the *old ballads*. These *ballads* held much the same place in the literature of the people that the longer and more elaborate romances did in the literature of the upper classes.

The authors of these ballads are unknown, nor do we know very definitely how or when they were composed. Some of them may have originally been made by wandering musicians, and sung or recited in taverns, in the streets, or at some village festivity. Others may have been composed by unknown singers among the people themselves. We must remember that in old days the gift of making verse was not confined to a literary or

professional class, it was a popular accomplishment. It was not until some time after printing had made books more common, and the people had got in the habit of reading their stories or poems instead of making or singing them for themselves, that this unwritten popular literature gradually lost its importance.

Many of the old ballads which have been collected and preserved are thought to date from the fifteenth century. Whatever their origin, we know that they were remembered and repeated by the country people: that children learned them from their elders, and that they were changed and perhaps improved or added to by one or another among the many who recited them. In the ballads some story is told in a simple style. No time is taken up with elaborate descriptions of Nature, or lengthy reflections. No doubt those simple folk that made or listened to the old ballads liked the story itself better than tiresome explanations or comments, and they wanted it told in a way that they could easily understand. It might be a story of some of the exploits of the brave outlaw Robin Hood, of a gallant fight like that between Percy and Douglas on the Scottish border, of a ghost that came at midnight to her lover's door, of a knight that was taken away to fairy-land by the queen of the fairies, and released from the spell by a maiden's love, — whatever it was it was told in a plain, straightforward fashion that often made it seem very real. This lack of artificiality and pretense is one of the greatest charms of these old ballads, and they are often very touching because the feeling in them is deep and true. To feel this we must read the ballads for ourselves and learn to love them, but a few examples may show something of their style and spirit.

Thus, in a ballad about an outlaw called *Johnnie*

*Armstrong*, we are thrilled by the spirit of some old hero who could die but never yield:

“Says Johnnie, ‘Fight on my merry men all!  
I’m a little wounded, but I’m not slain:  
I will lay me down to bleed awhile,  
And then rise and fight with you again.”

Or here in the famous ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens*, which tells of the shipwreck of that knight on a voyage from Norway to Scotland, we find a touch of beauty and pathos:

“O lang lang may the ladies sit,  
Wi’ their fans into their hand,  
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens  
Come sailing to the Strand!

“And lang, lang may the maidens sit,  
Wi’ their gowd kaims in their hair,  
A’ waiting for their ain dear loves, —  
For them they’ll see na mair.

“O forty miles off Aberdeen  
’Tis fifty fathoms deep,  
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,  
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet.”

As has been said, the ballads deal with human life, with the joys and sorrows of men and women. Yet while little is said about the great world of Nature, we are constantly made to feel its presence as the background to human action. In those days people passed a great part of their time out-of-doors, and the sights and sounds of the country were a familiar part of their daily life. The ballad-maker did not describe the braes or forests, the streams, or the sea, as a modern poet would be likely to do, but in reading the old ballads we

are constantly reminded that these adventures took place, for the most part, not in the towns but under the open sky. In *Robin Hood* we are in the merry greenwood, where it is pleasant to hear the birds sing; in another ballad a maiden dreams of gathering the heather with her lover on the braes of Yarrow; in another we are told of a knight treacherously slain in a lonely spot:

“Mony’s the one for him makes mane, (moan)  
But nane sall ken whar he is gane,  
O’er his white banes, when they are bare,  
The wind sall blaw for evermair.”

So Nature in the ballads is very real to us because to the people who made these poems, as well as to those that heard them, Nature was one of the familiar facts of life.

**Religious Drama.** — Besides their songs and stories and ballads, the people of fifteenth-century England had yet another form of literature. They had a drama, — short, crude plays on religious subjects, performed on village greens, or in the streets of some of the towns. It will be more convenient for us to treat of these *Miracle Plays*, as they were called, in connection with the great drama of Shakespeare’s time, for which they partly prepared the way. But we should be careful not to think of them merely as a preparation for a great dramatic period that then lay in the future. They were a part of the people’s literature, a part of the people’s life. Neither the actors in the fifteenth-century miracle plays nor their audiences asked themselves whether they were influencing the drama of the future: the plays were an end in themselves.

**Coming of the New Learning.** — So far in our study of the fifteenth century we have seen that various

causes combined to keep the new ideas, which were working such wonderful changes in Italy and elsewhere, out of England. Uninspired by these ideas, untouched by the fresh enthusiasm that stirred the men beyond the Alps, poets like Occleve and Lydgate worked on, copying the same old models, imitating a manner which had lost its freshness and novelty, and, perhaps, retelling stories which had come down from medieval times. We saw further, that while these literary or scholastic poets, who took their ideas from books, were apt to grow prosy, long-winded, and conventional, the people, who lived apart from books, and who loved songs and plays and stories, had a true and living literature of their own. This love of literature among the people themselves is the important fact for us to remember. The people were narrow-minded, superstitious, ignorant of many things, but they were apt to learn. If they could not read poetry, many among them could repeat or hear it with delight. If a great poet should rise up among them, there were many ready to give him welcome. Even during the middle years of the fifteenth century, a few scholars grew dissatisfied with the narrow limits of the old scholastic learning. So it happened that the new learning did not merely flow into England as an overflow of water reaches and covers a neighboring tract of level ground, but Englishmen themselves, moved by a strong desire, traveled to Italy in search of the new learning and brought it home.

**William Caxton.** — About the middle of Edward IV's reign, while the nation was yet unsettled, and before the new ideas had made much progress in England, WILLIAM CAXTON, the first English printer, set up his press in London. Caxton was born about 1422, in what is known as the Weald of Kent, a region then wild and

partially wooded, in the southwestern part of that county. He belonged, like Chaucer, to the respectable and prosperous merchant-class. Education was not as general then as it is now, but Caxton was sent to school as a boy. In after life he spoke gratefully of his parents for having given him this opportunity, and adds that for this cause he remembers them in his prayers. When he was about sixteen he was apprenticed to a rich and influential merchant in London, and soon after his master's death in 1449 he settled in the city of Bruges,

**It it plesē ony man spiritual or temporel to bye ony  
pyes of two and thre comemoraciōs of salisbury use  
enpryntid after the forme of this presēt lettre whiche  
ben wel and truly correct late hym comē to westmo-  
nester in to the almoneshe at the red pale and he shal  
haue them good chepe . . .**

### **Supplicatio stet cedula**

Reproduction of a Caxton Advertisement

in Flanders, which was then a great center of trade. Here Caxton prospered, for he was a capable and industrious man of business, and he appears to have been generally liked and trusted. But besides being a good man of business, Caxton loved books, especially the old romances, and he was able to write easily and in an entertaining way. So in his spare time he began to translate a collection of stories about Troy from French into English. About this time the Duke of Burgundy, within whose dominions Bruges lay, married Margaret, the sister of Edward IV, the English King. Caxton entered the service of the Duchess Margaret, and was encouraged by her to resume and complete his transla-

tions, which for a time he had laid aside. As there were then many English in Bruges, the book was much sought for, and Caxton found it hard to supply the demand. So he determined to print his book, instead of employing the old and laborious practice of having copies made of it by hand. "For as much," he says in his preface, "as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, my hand weary and not steadfast, my eyes dimmed with over-much looking on the white paper . . . and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen to address them as hastily as I might in this said book, therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and expense, to ordain this said book in print . . . and it is not written with pen and ink, as other books been, to the end that every man may have them at once." The *Historie of Troye* appeared in 1474. It was the first book to be printed in English. Two years later Caxton returned to England, and established himself as a printer near Westminster Abbey. Although he was by this time over fifty, Caxton worked there both as printer and translator for fifteen years with an enthusiastic industry. In 1477 he printed *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, translated from the French by his friend and patron Lord Rivers, the brother-in-law of the King, and edited by Caxton himself. This was the first book printed in England. During the next fourteen years he printed about eighty books, besides getting out new editions of some old ones. Some of them Caxton translated himself, and for many of them he wrote prefaces, from which we can often learn something of the old printer's tastes and difficulties, and of his keen interest in his work. He seems to have been a simple-minded but practical man, a shrewd tradesman, with a vein of romance in him and an unobtrusive

sense of humor. He enjoyed the favor of the great. "Many noble and divers gentlemen" discussed literary matters with him in his humble workshop; even Kings took an interest in his work. He published the poems of Chaucer, whom he calls "that noble and great philosopher," "who deserves the name of a laureate poet," of Gower, and of other famous men. In the great world outside the walls of his peaceful workshop, terrible and momentous things were being done. The Duke of Gloucester murdered his little nephew and seated himself on the throne as Richard III: the battle of Bosworth was fought and the bloody Wars of the Roses were at last ended. But through all these years of battle, and violence, and sudden change, Caxton, in his little shop under the shadow of the Abbey, carried on in faithfulness and quietness his great work for England. Like Bede he labored until the last, finishing one of his books, *The Lives of the Fathers*, on the very day he died, in the year before Columbus discovered America.

**Malory's Morte d'Arthur.**— One of the most important of all the books that Caxton printed, was a collection of stories about King Arthur and his knights, under the name of *Morte d'Arthur*, or the Death of Arthur. The book was compiled by a certain Sir Thomas Malory. It was based on several French romances, which Malory translated into English prose, and connected as well as he could in such a way as to make a fairly continuous story. Who Malory was is uncertain, but we are told that he finished his book in the middle years of Edward IV's reign (1471), and we know that Caxton printed it in 1485. Malory's task was a difficult one, for there were many separate stories about Arthur and his different knights, and even the same story had been told in many different ways. It was consequently very hard to



arrange all this mass of legend in an orderly way so that it would be really one book and not a mere succession of separate adventures. It would probably have taken a man of the highest genius to unite all these fragmentary and conflicting stories and to make one complete story as perfect in its design and proportions as a great epic. Malory had not the genius to do this, but he succeeded better than any one had done before him. He had not the finished art of a modern story-writer, and the reader of to-day often finds his noble old book confusing and tedious. But we must remember that when Malory wrote, the language was still unsettled, and that very few books of any importance had then been written in English prose. Whatever its shortcomings, the *Morte d'Arthur* was the greatest English book of romance: written when the old feudal nobility of England were being destroyed in the strife of the Civil Wars, it expressed the spirit of the dying medieval chivalry in its weakness and its strength; at the very end of the Middle Ages it gathered together these fragments of old romances, gave them a new life and handed them on to later times. For generations it was mainly from Malory that England learned the stories of her great national hero of romance, and it is to Malory's book that poets like Tennyson have turned when they sought to retell these old legends in modern verse. In this wonderful storehouse of romance you will find many stories that modern writers have made familiar. You may read there of the doings of King Arthur himself—how he got his wonderful sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake, how he warred against the heathen, how he married the beautiful Guinevere, and how at last, wounded in battle, he did not die but was taken to the peaceful Vale of Avalon to heal him of his wound. You

may read too, of the adventures of his knights, of Sir Launcelot, renowned for his courage and his courtesy, of Sir Tristram, the lover of the fair Iseult, of Sir Galahad, the pure in heart, to whom it was given to see the Holy Grail, and of many more. As a rule, Malory tells his story with no attempt at eloquence, and with but little comment; but there are a few places where he rises into a more impassioned style. One of these is this noble lament of Sir Ector over Sir Launcelot:

“And then Sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and his helm from him; and when he beheld Sir Launcelot’s visage, he fell down in a swoon; and when he awoke, it were hard for any tongue to tell the doleful complaints he made for his brother. ‘Ah! Sir Launcelot,’ said he, ‘thou wert head of all Christian Knights. And now, I dare say,’ said Sir Ector, ‘that Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, thou wert never matched of none earthly knight’s hands; and thou wert the courtliest knight that ever bear shield; and thou wert the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou wert the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou wert the kindest man that ever struck with sword; and thou wert the goodliest person that ever came among the press of knights; and thou wert the meekest man, and the gentlest, that ever eat in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.’”

**End of the Wars of the Roses, 1485.** — Shakespeare puts into the mouth of King Henry VII as he stands on the battlefield of Bosworth in the moment of his victory over Richard III the words:

“Now civil wars are stopp’d, peace lives again:  
That she may long live here, God say — Amen!”

On the whole these hopes of the conqueror were realized. There were, indeed, some conspiracies against his throne, but they were easily suppressed, and under Henry's strong if despotic rule, the land, weary of battles and bloodshed, entered upon a period of tranquillity. A new era had dawned, although the men of that time were probably unable to realize its full meaning. The power of the old feudal nobility was broken, for many of the noble families had perished in the long wars: the middle classes were beginning to gain in wealth and importance, and the way became open for new methods and new men.

**New Learning at the Universities.** — A few years after Henry VII came to the throne, a revolution in English education was begun by the introduction of the new learning into Oxford University. Oxford was at last roused from her long sleep, she caught the new interest in the study of the classics, she was stirred by religious enthusiasm, and she became the home of new ideas and the first center of the new learning in England. This was accomplished during the last ten years of the fifteenth century by a group of remarkable men who, because they advocated various religious, social, and educational reforms, are called **THE OXFORD REFORMERS**. The chief members of this little group were **WILLIAM GROCYN** (1440?–1519), **THOMAS LINACRE** (about 1460–1524), **JOHN COLET** (1467?–1519?), **SIR THOMAS MORE** (1478–1535), and the great Dutch scholar, **DESIDERIUS ERASMUS** (1467–1536). In 1491 Grocyn returned from Italy, where he had studied under two of the greatest classical scholars of the day, and began the regular teaching of Greek at Oxford. He was soon joined by his friend and fellow-student, Linacre, a learned physician, who had also just returned from his studies in Italy, and the two worked together teaching Greek, a

language generally recognized as a principal feature in the new education. Colet, who, like his friends Grocyn and Linacre, had gone to Italy to study, got back to Oxford in 1496. He was a man of noble character and high aims. He was deeply religious, and, while he was interested in classical studies, the most important use he made of his scholarship was to study carefully the Greek Testament for himself. Colet saw many things in the Church and in the State which he burned to set right, and while he was a quiet, gentle scholar, he could fight bravely and manfully for what he believed to be right. He exercised a great influence over Erasmus, who, too poor to go to Italy, came to Oxford in 1497, attracted by the reputation it had already gained for classical studies. Among Linacre's pupils was Thomas More, a merry boy with gray eyes, full of fun and mischief; but with a marvelous aptitude for study. More learned Greek from Linacre, but his association with Colet seems to have deeply influenced his future life and thought. After a little, Erasmus went to teach Greek at Cambridge, and that great university began to do its part in the educational revival. Then, early in the sixteenth century, in Henry VIII's reign, the influence of Italian culture reached the Court, and finally became a part of the life of the nation.

**Erasmus, Colet, and More.** — In a few years the little circle of scholars at Oxford was broken. Erasmus went back to the Continent and became one of the famous men of his age. Colet was made Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He was rich, and he enjoyed both the favor and the respect of King Henry VIII, but wealth could not make him self-indulgent, nor could any worldly advantage make him less fearless and outspoken, or prevent him from doing what he thought was

right. He took a deep interest in the training of children, and he spent a large part of his fortune in the establishment of a free school in London, the Grammar School of St. Paul's.

More went to London also, where he studied law, and soon became prominent as a statesman. In 1529 he was made Lord Chancellor, but in 1535 he lost the King's favor through his fearless adherence to his own convictions, and was shortly after beheaded. He went to his death with cheerful courage, one of the noblest victims of royal tyranny and injustice.

The Oxford reformers, with the exception of Erasmus, made few important or lasting contributions to literature; their greatest work was done in other ways. More, however, wrote several books, one of which, at least, deserves to be generally read and remembered. This book, *The Utopia*, is a description of an imaginary island of that name, and an account of its people, its laws, and customs. In 1516 when More wrote his *Utopia*, earnest men must have often thought with wonder and interest of that new world beyond the sea, which the discoveries of Columbus and his successors had so recently brought to light. Explorers had done little more than skirt the edge of those strange lands, and the wisest man could only imagine what lay beyond. Now More, like Colet and other thoughtful men, saw many evils in the world about him. He meditated upon the enormous power of money, and the wide difference between the lives of rich and poor. He thought that the English law, which at that time made robbery and other crimes punishable with death, was both cruel and unwise. And so, thinking how such things might be remedied, he imagined the isle of *Utopia* (or nowhere, as the word means) lying far off in that undis-

covered west, somewhere between Brazil and India, and "South of the line Equinoctial," in which society should be organized in a different and a better way. He tried to show what the world ought to be, but he adds, "I needs confess and grant that many things be in the Utopia made public, which in our cities I may rather wish for than hope after." In Utopia there is no poverty, for all things are owned in common. No one is punished or persecuted on account of his religious belief. No one is permitted to be idle, and no one is forced to work too much, but each does his fair share, and so there is enough for all. The *Utopia* was composed in Latin, but it was early translated into English and took its place as an English classic. Many of More's ideas may seem mere idle fancies, — indeed we have come to speak of ideas too perfect to be realized as *utopian*, — but he also pictures many improvements that have actually been put in practice.

#### IMPORTANT DATES

FRANCIS PETRARCH, the first of the humanists	1304–1374
CHRYSOLORAS teaches Greek in Italy	1395
Rise of painting, architecture, sculpture, etc., in Italy under NICOLA PISANO, FRA ANGELICO, and others in the .....	13th, 14th, and 15th Cent.
Rise of oil-painting in Holland under HUBERT and JAN VAN EYCK in the .....	14th and 15th Cent.
INVENTION OF PRINTING .....	about 1450
CAPTURE OF CONSTANTINOPLE BY THE TURKS .....	1453
After the fall of the city Greek scholars take refuge in Italy.	
REBUILDING OF ST. PETER'S begun at Rome .....	1450
COSMO DE MEDICI, patron of art and learning at Florence	1389–1464
LORENZO DE MEDICI, dominant at Florence: under him revival of art and letters .....	1469–1492
Great age of Italian art under LEONARDO DA VINCI, TITIAN, RAPHAEL, MICHAEL ANGELO, and others in .....	latter 15th and early 16th Cent.

DIAZ discovers the Cape of Good Hope .....	1486
COLUMBUS discovers America .....	1492
Voyage of JOHN and SEBASTIAN CABOT to North America....	1497
VASCO DA GAMA discovers way to India by sea .....	1498
LUTHER protests against the sale of INDULGENCES .....	1517
LUTHER at DIET OF WORMS .....	1521
COPERNICUS publishes his astronomical theory .....	1543
Followers of Chaucer in England.	
THOMAS OCCLEVE .....	1370?-1450?
JOHN LYDGATE .....	1370?-1451?
Followers of Chaucer in Scotland.	
KING JAMES I OF SCOTLAND .....	1394-1437
ROBERT HENRYSON .....	1425?-1506?
WILLIAM DUNBAR .....	1460?-1520?
Popular Ballads, Miracle Plays, and Songs.	
WILLIAM CAXTON brings printing to England .....	1476?
SIR THOMAS MALORY'S <i>Morte d'Arthur</i> (printed) .....	1485
Hundred Years' War, a series of wars between .....	1337-1453
Wars of the Roses .....	about 1455-1485
ACCESSION OF HENRY VII. ....	1485
GROCYN and LINACRE teach Greek at Oxford.....	1491-1493
COLET, MORE, AND ERASMUS at Oxford .....	1491-1500

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRELUDE TO THE AGE OF ELIZABETH

WE have seen how the "new learning" definitely entered England through the Universities, we must now trace the progress of the Renaissance in England from the beginning of Henry VIII's reign to the middle of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when the stimulating and varied experiences of the nation found their greatest utterances through literature. We shall see how, as the sixteenth century advanced, the new ideas became more and more widely spread until they reached people of almost every class, and how the whole nation was affected by the vital changes which were taking place in the religious as well as in the intellectual life of Europe during this time.

**Henry VIII and His Court.** — The reign of Henry VIII (1509–1547) was not a great literary era, like the age of Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne, or Queen Victoria. There were able and good men in King Henry's time, like More and Colet, strong, masterful men, like the famous Cardinal Wolsey, or the King himself, but there were no writers of commanding genius, no original literary works of the highest kind.

Yet these thirty-eight years of Henry's reign had a very important influence on the future. New methods and new ideas came into literature, a great change was made in the position of the Church, and in many ways England was moving toward the greatest literary era in her history.



To some extent this movement was helped forward by the character of the King. In many ways Henry VIII resembles some powerful prince or noble of Renaissance Italy. When he came to the throne, he was young, handsome, rich, expert in manly and martial exercises, high-spirited, and enormously popular. He was learned, too, above the other princes of his time: he loved poetry and music, and he even wrote songs himself. He loved beauty, color, and magnificent entertainments, and his Court was one of the most brilliant in Europe. In his splendid palace at Whitehall, a little beyond the limits of old London, the King had gathered pictures by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Holbein, and other master-painters of that great age of art. All this was significant of the coming of a new age. Henry VII saved, Henry VIII spent; and as we read of the fantastic pageants, the sumptuous appointments, the costly retinue, and the elaborate ceremonial of the younger Henry's Court, we feel that something, at least, of the warm life and vivid color of the Italian Renaissance had found an entrance into England.

**The Renaissance in Literature: Wyatt and Surrey.** — This changed spirit of the English Court did not show itself in outward splendor only; it showed itself in literature also. Throughout the Tudor period, the English were urged forward by a desire to learn from the Continental nations, and they appear to have known instinctively that of all countries Italy was the one best fitted to meet their needs. And so, just as Grocyn and his fellow-students had gone to Italy in search of new ideas in scholarship, English versifiers began to study *Petrarch*, *Dante*, and other Italian poets, and to make verses in imitation of these foreign models. Two noblemen of Henry VIII's Court, SIR THOMAS WYATT (1503–1542),

and HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY (about 1517–1547), took the lead in introducing Italian meters, and in giving a touch of the Italian spirit to English verse. Both poets were men of education, high position, and refined tastes. Wyatt was handsome, manly, and accomplished. He excelled in conversation and played beautifully upon the lute. He was considerably older than Surrey, and the first to experiment in the new forms of verse. Not unnaturally his work is less smooth and finished than that of his follower, but his character seems to have been deeper and more serious. Love was the great theme of Petrarch's famous series of *Sonnets*, and the greater part of both Wyatt's and Surrey's poems deal with the same subject. When poets tell us that they are dying for love, it does not do to take them too literally, and we may be sure that the doleful songs and sonnets in which Wyatt and Surrey detail their sufferings were largely poetical exercises. Yet in Wyatt, under all his affectations, there are touches of true feeling, a sadness not altogether assumed, and in some of his poems there is a real longing for a life of quiet apart from the falsehoods and distractions of the Court.

While Wyatt and Surrey had a genuine love for poetry, it was far from being the chief interest of their lives. They were courtiers, fine gentlemen, to whom verse-making was an elegant accomplishment, an occupation and amusement for their leisure hours. Yet, while they wrote as amateurs, they had a most important influence on the development of English poetry, for they were the first in England to use certain poetic forms and meters, which their successors adopted and improved. Wyatt introduced into England a kind of poem known as the *sonnet*, a poetic form in which

Dante, Petrarch, and other Italian poets had excelled, and it was not long before the sonnet became one of the glories of English literature.<sup>1</sup>

The service which Surrey performed for English poetry was probably even more important, for he was the first Englishman to use the unrimed measure known as *blank verse*.<sup>2</sup> Surrey, indeed, was not himself a great master of this verse, but he showed the way to his successors, and in their hands this meter became wonderfully melodious and majestic. Marlowe, Shakespeare, and the other great playwrights, used it in the drama; Milton made it the verse of his long narrative poems. It now stands above all rivals as the distinctive dramatic and epic verse-form of English literature.

As Wyatt and Surrey were not professional authors,

<sup>1</sup> A *sonnet*, in the modern sense, must consist of exactly fourteen lines, each line must contain five accented syllables, and the rimes must be arranged according to certain strict rules. Wyatt imitated Petrarch's sonnets, or, in some cases, translated them directly into English. Then Surrey, following Wyatt's example, whom he greatly admired, wrote sonnets likewise.

<sup>2</sup> The first important feature of *blank verse* is, that while it possesses the measure, or meter, of verse, it is *blank*, or free from *rime*. All unrimed verse is not necessarily blank verse, although all blank verse is unrimed. In addition to the absence of rime, the *verses*, or lines as we commonly call them, must be in the measure, or meter, known as *iambic pentameter*. The line:

"The thing became a trumpet whence he blew"

is an iambic pentameter line. This line contains ten syllables, and if you read it so as to bring out its regular *beat* or movement, you will naturally emphasize certain syllables. Thus — "The *thing* be-came a *trum-pet* whence he *blew*." The accent is not always so regular as this, nor is the number of syllables invariably ten, but this is a good example of the ordinary, or normal, *iambic pentameter* line.

they did not print their verses, but simply circulated them in manuscript among their friends. In 1557, after both poets were dead, their poems were published in a collection of *Songs and Sonnets* by various authors. This book (which is commonly known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, because it was published by a man named Tottel) was the earliest of many similar collections of verse.

**Poetry from Wyatt and Surrey to Spenser.** — More than thirty years elapsed before the work begun by Wyatt and Surrey was taken up by any poet of the first rank. Surrey, who outlived Wyatt three years, was beheaded on the charge of treason in 1547, the last year of Henry VIII's reign. No great poet appeared during the reigns of Edward VI (1547–1553) and Mary (1553–1558); and Elizabeth had been on the throne for more than twenty years before the spirit of the Renaissance began to find an adequate expression in a wonderful outburst of literary genius which is one of the glories of her reign. When we speak of the Age of Elizabeth as "the Golden Age of English literature," we must not forget that this great literary period covers the latter and not the earlier half of her reign. She had ruled for more than twenty years before Spenser, the earliest of the great poets of her era, published his first important poem (1579), and her reign was more than half over before the name of Shakespeare began to be known to the London theater-goers.

Nevertheless, these thirty-two years between the death of Surrey and the coming of Spenser (1547–1579) were eventful years in the history of the nation. By religious dissensions and persecution, by the spread of new educational ideas, by many experiences, England was rapidly moving toward a new goal. Yet while we

find no man of supreme genius in literature between Surrey and Spenser, we find many writers, some of them men of marked ability, whose work was preparing the way for the great age that was close at hand. Among these men we may mention ROGER ASCHAM (1515–1568), at one time tutor to Queen Elizabeth, who was one of the leading scholars and prose writers of his day. Ascham did much to increase the taste for classical studies. He embodied his ideas on education in a famous book called *The Schoolmaster* (1570). The sermons of HUGH LATIMER (1485?–1555), a sturdy reformer, who was burnt at the stake in Queen Mary's reign, are remarkable for their vigor, simplicity, and homely humor. These men, with many others, show the increasing strength and importance of English prose. In poetry, GEORGE GASCOIGNE (1536?–1577), a man of restless energy and adventurous life, proved himself a clever writer and a keen critic of the evils of his time. He wrote a comedy, he was part author of one of the earliest English tragedies, he composed songs, tried his hand at blank verse, and through his experiments in many forms of composition became a pioneer of the coming age. The *Steel Glass* (1576), a satirical poem on the abuses and follies of the day, is probably his best known work.

**Sackville.** — Early in Queen Elizabeth's reign, THOMAS SACKVILLE (1536–1608), although then a very young man, won an honorable place for himself in the history of English poetry. He was a distant kinsman of the Queen, and he early won her notice and favor. Thus both opportunity and inclination pushed him toward a diplomatic and public career. But in his youth Sackville showed that he possessed powers that qualified him to win renown of a very different kind. Before he left the university, he had gained some reputation

as a poet, and he continued to write poetry after he came to London and had entered upon the study of the Law at the Inner Temple.<sup>1</sup> In 1561 Christmas was celebrated at the Inner Temple with great festivities. Among the other features of the entertainment was a play composed for the occasion by Sackville and Thomas Norton, a fellow-member of the Inner Temple. This play was *Gorboduc* (or *Ferrex and Porrex*, as it is often called), famous as the first regular tragedy in the history of the English drama. It is written in the manner of the Latin playwright Seneca, and it shows the disastrous results of the selfish strife between two brothers, *Ferrex* and *Porrex*, between whom their father *Gorboduc* had divided the kingdom. Many of the speeches are long and tiresome, and the play as a whole is dull, dignified, and monotonous. But if we want to judge the play fairly, we must not dwell exclusively on the stiffness of the verse, or the heavy respectability which weighs down the play; we must think also of its merits and of the circumstances under which it was composed. We must not expect two young gentlemen of the Temple (with little or nothing in English to guide them) to create a new kind of drama at a stroke, or to dash off a tragic masterpiece at the first trial, in order to give variety to a Christmas entertainment. Plays were to be written before long which were to leave this

<sup>1</sup> The *Inner Temple* was one of the four *Inns of Court*, — that is legal societies, roughly corresponding to our modern law school, which had the exclusive right to admit persons to the bar. The other Inns were Lincoln's Inn, the Middle Temple, and Gray's Inn. The Inner and the Middle Temple occupied the land and buildings which had formerly been held by the Knights Templar. The place retained the name of the Temple after it was leased by the lawyers, and the students or members of the Inner or Middle Temple were often called Templars.

formal imitation of a poor classical model far behind, but *Ferrex and Porrex* was creditable, nevertheless, as a first attempt, and it was especially important because it set the fashion of using blank verse in plays, a fashion which the coming dramatists were to follow with great results.

*Ferrex and Porrex* marks a step forward in the progress of the English drama, but Sackville's contributions to a long poem called *The Mirror for Magistrates*, have a distinct merit quite apart from their effect on the history of English poetry. This work (which Sackville is supposed to have planned about 1557) was intended to be a *mirror* in which *magistrates*, that is the great in this world, could see by the example of those who had fallen from power how insecure worldly prosperity is, and how those in high places are brought low. Sackville's contribution to the poem consisted of a general preface, or *Induction*, and the *Complaint of Henry, Duke of Buckingham* (the adherent of Richard III). In the *Complaint*, the spirit of Buckingham relates the story of the Duke's ambitious life and its violent end, as a warning to others. The opening stanzas of the *Induction* will give some notion of Sackville's descriptive style:

“The wrathful winter 'proaching on a-pace,  
With blust'ring blasts had all y-bared the treen, (trees)  
And old Saturnus with his frosty face  
With chilling cold had pierced the tender green;  
The mantles rent, wherein enwrappèd been  
The gladsome groves that now lay overthrown,  
The tappets<sup>1</sup> torn, and every bloom down blowen.

. . . . .

Hawthorn had lost his motley livery,  
The naked twigs were shivering all for cold;  
And dropping down the tears abundantly;

<sup>1</sup> Tapestry-hangings.

Each thing (me thought) with weeping eye me told  
 The cruel season, bidding me withhold  
 Myself within, for I was gotten out  
 Into the fields whereas I walked about."

Sackville's poetry is on a higher level than that of Wyatt or Surrey. His verse moves smoothly, his tone is serious, dignified, and noble. On the whole we may safely say that Sackville wrote the best poetry produced in England between the death of Chaucer and the coming of Edmund Spenser. This seems the more remarkable when we remember that Sackville gave but a fraction of his life to literature. Poetry was but the occasional recreation of his young manhood; but while his best years were spent as courtier and statesman, it is chiefly by his work as a poet that he is remembered. His *Mirror for Magistrates* is a connecting link between the poetry of Lydgate, the disciple of Chaucer, and the greater glories of Spenser, the poet of the *Faërie Queen*.

#### IMPORTANT DATES

HENRY VIII .....	1509-1547
Dean Colet founds St. Paul's School .....	1512
Cardinal Wolsey in power .....	about 1515-1529
Tyndale's translation of the New Testament .....	about 1525
Acts of Supremacy and Succession .....	1534
Destruction of the Monasteries .....	1536-1539
WYATT AND SURREY, the chief Court poets of Henry VIII's reign. Wyatt introduced the Italian sonnet, and Surrey blank verse. These poems were first published in TOTTEL'S <i>Miscellany</i> .....	1557
JOHN HEYWOOD (attached to Henry VIII's Court, and author of various INTERLUDES) .....	1497?-1580?
ROGER ASCHAM .....	1515-1568
ASCHAM'S <i>Toxophilus</i> .....	1545
EDWARD VI .....	1547-1553



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Book of Common Prayer .....	1549
Growth of PROTESTANTISM, and foundation of numerous GRAM- MAR SCHOOLS were among the features of this reign.	
MARY .....	1553-1558
Persecution of Protestants begins .....	1555
ELIZABETH .....	1558-1603
Elizabeth restores Royal Supremacy over the Church of England and reëstablishes the use of the English Prayer Book.	
SACKVILLE writes (with Norton) <i>Gorboduc</i> , or <i>Ferrex and Porrex</i> , the first regular English tragedy, acted .....	1561
and portions of <i>The Mirror for Magistrates</i> .....	1563
FOXES'S <i>Book of Martyrs</i> .....	1563
NICHOLAS UDALL'S <i>Ralph Roister Doister</i> { written about .....	1540
{ published .....	1566
GEORGE GASCOIGNE writes comedies (about 1566) and <i>The Glass</i> .....	1576
FIRST PUBLIC THEATER opened .....	1576
Drake sails for the Pacific .....	1577
HOLINSHED'S <i>Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland</i> .....	1577
NORTH'S translation of <i>Plutarch's Lives</i> .....	1579

### FOREIGN DATES

In Europe this was the period of LUTHER (d. 1546), CALVIN (d. 1564), and the REFORMATION. In the fine arts, the RENAISSANCE IN ITALY reached its height in the works of RAPHAEL (d. 1520), MICHAEL ANGELO (d. 1564), and TITIAN (d. 1576); and in poetry, in ARIOSTO (d. 1533), and TASSO (d. 1595). In France literature was influenced by classical models. The ships of MAGELLAN made the first voyage around the world, 1519-1522. COPERNICUS published his discovery of the revolution of the earth round the sun, 1543.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CULMINATION OF THE RENAISSANCE

THE fact that by one cause or another the coming of the Renaissance to England was delayed was in no way detrimental to the development of English literature. On the contrary, it rather aided it. The new knowledge and enthusiasm, coming as they did in their full power and maturity, combined with the strong moral impulse of the Reformation, gave birth in the latter part of the sixteenth century to one of the most illustrious periods of literature in human history, the great age of Elizabeth. For more than a hundred and fifty years after the death of Chaucer, the English mind had produced but little. Great events had happened in that time, which were later to contribute to the splendid national energy that marked the England of Elizabeth; but in a state of unrest and political disturbance, the nation had directed its mental energies chiefly to other ends than literature. The Wars of the Roses had been followed by the political and religious quarrels of Henry VIII's time, and these, in turn, by the persecutions that marred the reign of Queen Mary. The early years under Elizabeth were years of uncertainty, of promise rather than fulfilment. The young Queen and her counselors were busy putting their house in order; religious dissensions were still rife, and England's future was clouded by the threatening power of Spain. The work of Wyatt and Surrey, of Sackville and Gascoigne,

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was that of experiment, — the dawn and promise of the coming day. But with the advent of Spenser, the earliest of the great Elizabethan writers, we pass into a period of the most lavish and amazing creative energy. Spenser is the first master poet of the sixteenth century in England. With him begins a succession of great men in whose works the Renaissance finds full and adequate expression.

To account for this sudden and splendid outburst of literature after so many years of comparative barrenness, we must know something of the social, political, and educational conditions of the time. The Renaissance, though composed of so many forces, will not alone explain it. No one influence was the cause of this change; it was the result of the fortunate conjunction of many causes within England as well as without.

**Unity of the Nation.** — Never before in the history of England had the nation been so united as it was during the latter part of the sixteenth century. The spirit of patriotism, of national pride in England's greatness, which had been growing steadily since the close of the civil wars, was intense among all classes. The Tudor sovereigns, Henry VII and Henry VIII, had ruled with a strong hand, it is true, and had increased the power of the crown, but at the same time they had given England an efficient government. Henry VIII's daring stand against the Pope had roused among the people a sense of national independence and strength; in defiance of the papal authority he had made himself the head of the Church in England, and England had stood by him. Moreover, when Elizabeth came to the throne at the end of Queen Mary's reign, with its bitterness, its confusions, and martyrdoms, she did much to soften the violence of party strife. By her patience and toler-

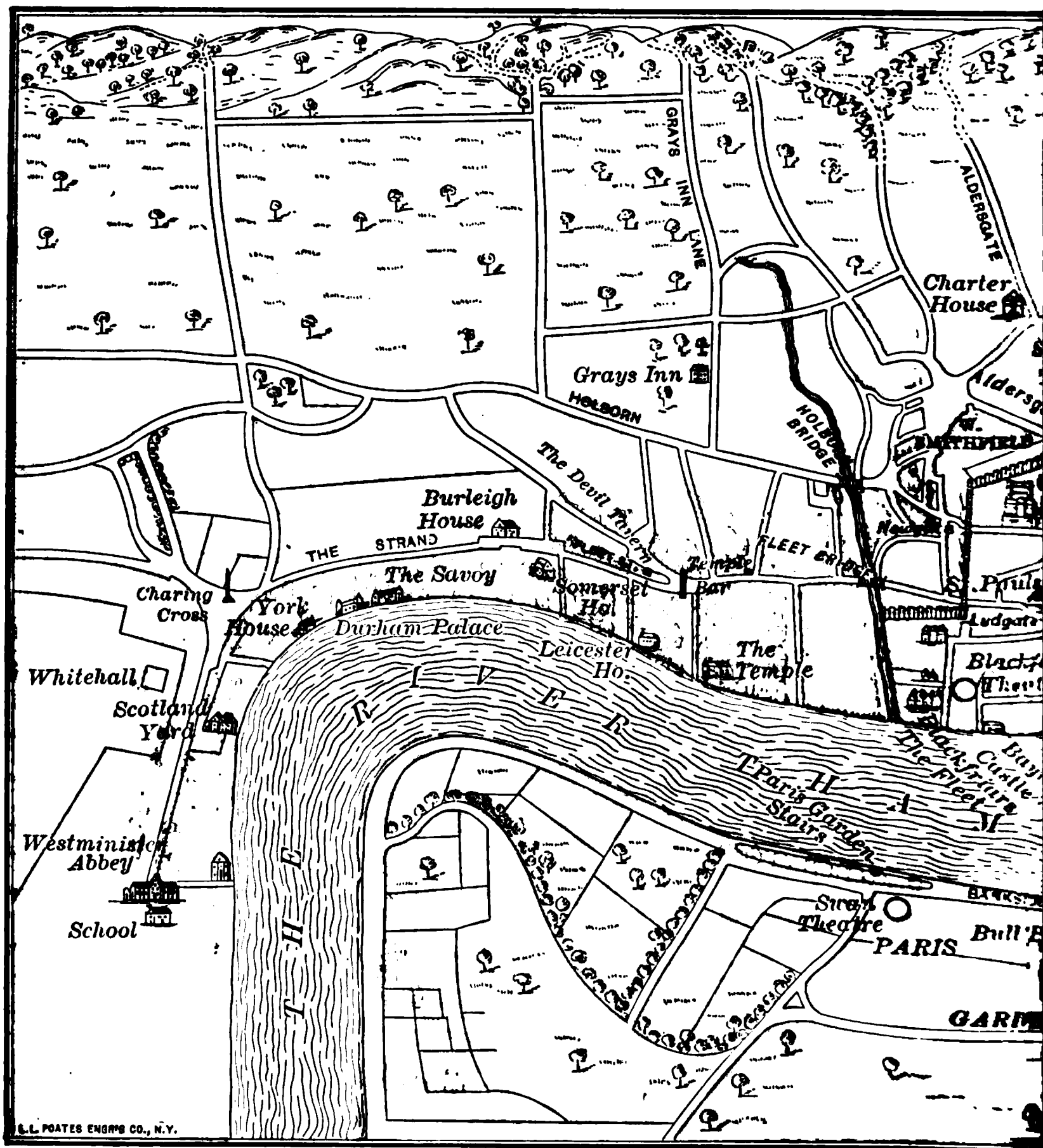
ance she united all classes of Englishmen in a common sentiment, and by her statecraft won for her country a distinguished position abroad. In 1588, when the Spanish Armada sailed out of the ports of Spain and Portugal, bent on crushing the power of England, the English people, Catholic and Protestant, stood firm for their country and their queen. With light-hearted confidence — itself proof of England's youth — Drake and his captains finished their game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe, and then sailed out of Plymouth harbor to meet and destroy England's greatest enemy. Their victory was a victory for English patriotism, and was one means of awaking England to a sense of her full possibilities.

**Intellectual Growth and the Extension of Education.** The nation's intellectual and spiritual growth, however, was even greater in these years than its political or material advance. By the latter part of the sixteenth century the full significance of the Renaissance had dawned upon the English mind. The spirit of investigation and of independent criticism which, directed upon church matters and the study of the Bible, had brought about the Reformation, was applied likewise to secular subjects, to the study of government, literature, and philosophy. The result was a new independence and spontaneity of thought, and all England felt the moving, quickening impulse. The voyages of discovery and exploration made by the English sailors who followed in the wake of Columbus stirred men's imagination; England's intellectual horizon was enormously extended. Moreover, as a result of the Renaissance, many free grammar schools had been established throughout the country, by which some tincture of the new classical learning had spread to the middle classes.

One historian says that the grammar schools founded in the reigns of Edward VI and of Elizabeth constituted "a system of middle-class education which by the close of the century had changed the very face of England." One result of this was that now for the first time the middle and lower-middle classes were represented in English literature. Before the great literary outburst in Elizabeth's reign, the literature of England had been almost entirely written by ecclesiastics or by men of the aristocratic class. But now we witness the rise of the people in the Kingdom of Letters; the appearance of the "third estate." And it is to these men of the "third estate" that the glory of Elizabethan literature is largely due. Spenser, for instance, was the son of a cloth-weaver; Shakespēare, of a provincial dealer in hides and wool; Marlowe, of a shoemaker. All these, and many others, came from a class which hitherto had had almost no part or place in the making of the representative literature of the nation; and all these men, like many of their followers, began their education at one or the other of the free grammar schools.

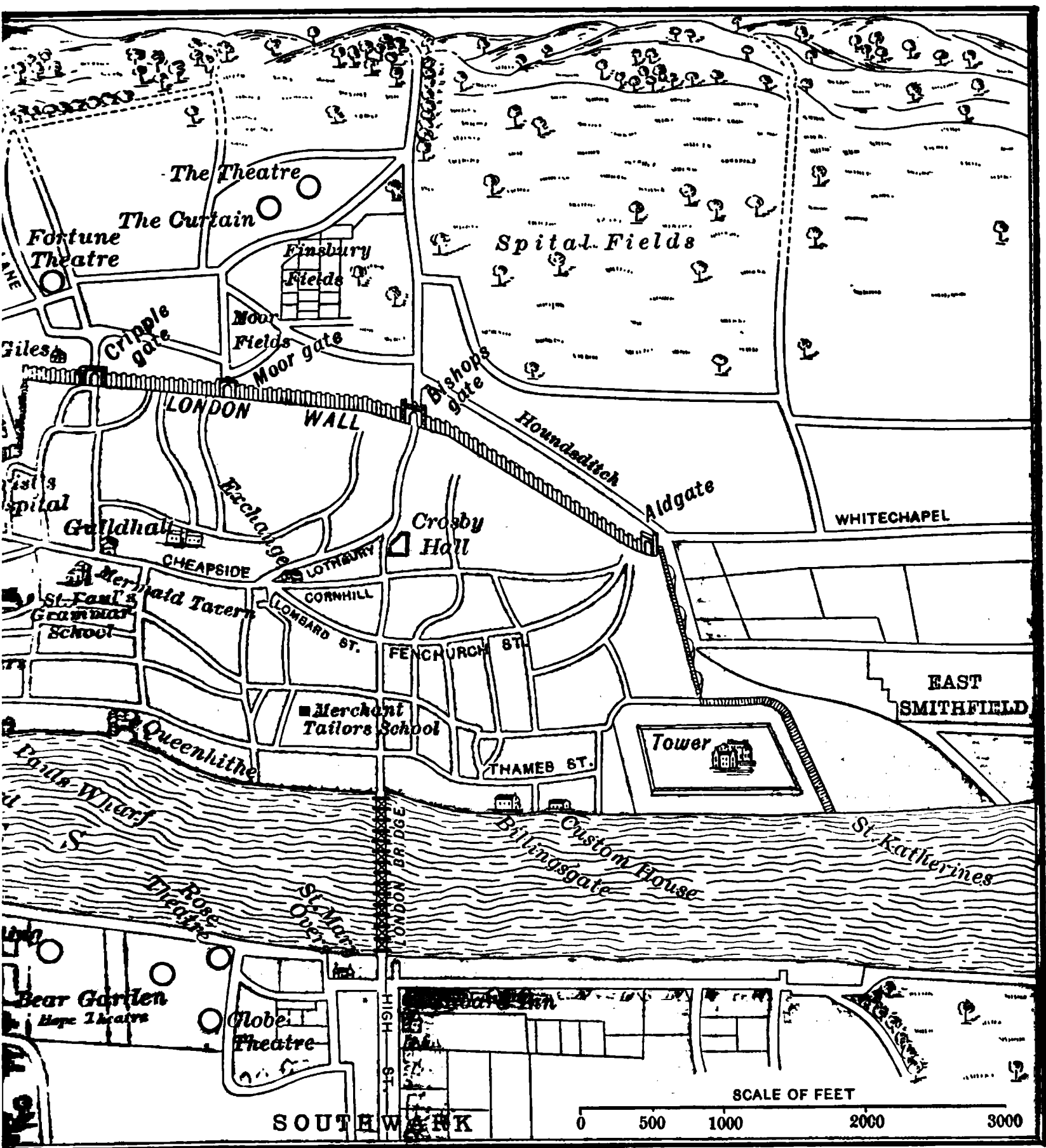
**Joy and Splendor of Life.** — Naturally this sense of national unity and security, and this political, social, and mental growth, resulted in increased prosperity for the nation, and added greatly to the joy and splendor of life. England was extending her commercial and maritime interests. Her trade increased with Flanders, and her merchant ships pushed north and south, east and west. The comforts and luxuries of life became more numerous. And with the ease and wealth that sprang from this growing prosperity came that delight in beauty, that half-pagan pleasure in the splendid adornments of life, which characterized the Italian Renaissance. Life, no longer shut within the heavy masonry

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## SKETCH MAP OF EL

Based on contemporary maps and showing approximate  
the chief streets



## ELIZABETHAN LONDON

...ly the sites of the principal theaters, etc., and some of  
...s and suburbs.





of the feudal castle, ran glittering in the open sunshine. Stately villas were built, with long gable roofs, grotesque carvings, and shining oriels, and were surrounded with the walks and terraces, the statuary and the fountains, of an Italian garden.

The passion for color showed itself among the wealthier classes in a lavish magnificence and eccentricity of costume. The young dandy went "perfumed like a milliner," and often affected the fashions of Italy. In its luxury of delight in life and color, the nation bedecked itself

"With silken coats, and caps, and golden rings,  
With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales, and things;  
With scarfs, and fans, and double change of bravery,  
With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery."

In spite of bitter protests from the Puritans and moralists at the extravagance and absurdity of the fashions, men put off their more sober garments to rustle in silks and satins, to sparkle with jewels; they were gorgeous in laces and velvets; they glittered with chains and brooches of gold; they gladly suffered themselves to be tormented by huge ruffs, stiff with the newly discovered vanity of starch.

The same spirit showed itself in the costly banquets; in the showy pageants or street processions, with their elaborate scenery and allegorical characters; in the revels like those with which Queen Elizabeth was received at Kenilworth; in the spectacular entertainment of the mask, a performance in which poet, musician, and — as we should say — the stage manager, worked together to delight mind, eye, and ear. Milton has this splendor in mind when he writes:

"There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,

And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
 With mask and antique pageantry,  
 Such sights as youthful poets dream  
 On summer eves by haunted stream."

**Elizabethan Delight in Life.** — But the Elizabethan passion for dress and ornament is but the surface indication of the immense delight in life which characterizes the time. If we would appreciate the vital spirit of this crowded and bewildering age, we must feel the rush of its superb and irrepressible energy, pouring itself out through countless channels. England was like a youth first come to the full knowledge of his strength, rejoicing as a giant to run his course, and determined to do, to see, to know, to enjoy to the full. The noble and wealthy sons of England crowded to Italy; they "swam in a gondola," they plunged into the riotous and luxurious pleasures of Venice. The fever of adventure burned in men's veins. Drake sailed round the world (1577-1580); the tiny ships of Hawkins, Frobisher, Gilbert, and the rest, parted the distant waters of unplowed seas. The buccaneers plundered and fought with the zest and unwearied vigor of the Viking. Sir Walter Raleigh, with an insatiable and many-sided capacity for life typical of his time, wrote poetry, boarded Spanish galleons, explored the wilderness, and produced in his old age a huge *History of the World*. In their full confidence of power, men carried on vast literary undertakings, the magnitude of which would have daunted a less vigorous generation. Nothing wearied, nothing fatigued them; like Raleigh they could "toil terribly." The young Francis Bacon — lawyer, philosopher, and courtier — wrote to one of the Queen's counselors with an inimitable audacity: "I have taken all knowledge to be my province."

**Shakespeare's London.** — The center of all this full and active life was London. It was there that not only all the great dramatists, poets, and courtiers met, but there, too, came the famous travelers after their long and perilous voyages, to take their ease at their inns. At the old Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street gathered the great men of the age. Here Shakespeare, Jonson, and Raleigh, and the rest, drank their Malmsey and Canary, and smoked with wonder the newly introduced tobacco, discussing, doubtless, the newest play or poem, or listening eagerly to travelers' tales of the splendors of Italy or the marvels of the New World.

We must remember that the London of Shakespeare, like that of Chaucer, was a walled town, and that its great gates were still used. Just outside of the wall to the north lay open fields, dotted occasionally with houses and windmills. There was Smithfield or Smoothfield, where tournaments had been held, and there, a little to the eastward, was the site of the earliest theaters. Much of the ground about the city was thus uninhabited. The population of London at this time is placed at about a hundred and fifty thousand people, so that while the city was already pushing out into the country in some directions, the bulk of the people could still be accommodated within the walls.

The streets were narrow and ill-paved, and unhealthy from refuse and bad drainage, but they were gay with the bright and varied costumes of the people. Along the Strand, which stretched beyond the city wall parallel with the Thames, stood some of the finest houses of the great nobles. The majority of houses were built chiefly of wood, although brick and stone were beginning to be used. They were turreted, and had many gables and overhanging upper stories. All the hand-

some places on the Strand, whose beautiful gardens sloped to the Thames, had terraces and steps leading down to the water, and every great establishment had its barge and watermen. Indeed by either night or day the Thames was a beautiful sight, for the river then ran clear and sparkling, while on it floated snowy swans; and brightly trimmed boats, filled with a gay company, skimmed over its surface.

But to make our mental picture complete, we must repeople these scenes with the rush of life; the nave of St. Paul's Cathedral is filled with gossiping throngs, the Thames with its pleasure-seekers; the theaters are packed with noisy spectators. If we can but make all this alive again in our imagination, we shall realize that to live in Shakespeare's London was to touch at every point all the crowded activities of the time.

**Summary.** — As we review the achievements of Elizabethan England and understand this young life with its varied spheres of action, we can see that the same magnificent energy which made England prosperous at home and triumphant on the seas is the motive power back of the greatest creative period of our literature. Looking at this great time as a whole, we must see England as "a noble and puissant Nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep and shaking her invincible locks — as an eagle mewing her mighty youth and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam." Elizabethan literature is but one outlet for this imperious energy; it is the new feeling for life that creates the drama as well as discovers kingdoms far away.

## EDMUND SPENSER

(1552-1599)

"Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven  
With the moon's beauty, and the moon's soft pace,  
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend."

— WORDSWORTH'S *Prelude*.

"The gentle Spenser, Fancy's pleasing son:  
Who, like a copious river, pour'd his song  
O'er all the mazes of enchanted ground."

— THOMSON'S *Seasons*.

"The love of beauty, however, and not of truth, is the moving principle of his mind; and he is guided in his fantastic delineations by no rule, but by the impulse of an inexhaustible imagination."

— HAZLITT'S *Lectures on the English Poets*.

In the region of poetry, Spenser stands at the entrance of this high-souled and adventurous time. As he was slightly older than most of the famous writers of his day, — two years older than his friend, Sir Philip Sidney, nine years older than Bacon, and twelve years older than Marlowe or Shakespeare, — it is not surprising that he was the earliest of the greater authors of the reign to begin his work. Bacon was about to enter upon the study of the law, and Shakespeare was still a country boy, roaming through the woods and leafy lanes of his native Warwickshire, when Spenser had already won an enduring place for himself in the literature of his country.

Yet while Spenser was the first of the greater poets of his epoch to win recognition, while he was, in this sense, the forerunner of a great poetic era, he was only to a very small extent the model, or the master, of those who immediately succeeded him. Spenser's great-

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est work, *The Faërie Queene*, is a long narrative poem of chivalric adventure and high ideals. But in this kind of poetry Spenser had practically no followers or competitors among the poets of his own age. Both the demand of the people and the genius of the time



Edmund Spenser

were above all for the drama, and Spenser's greatest contemporaries in poetry, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and many others, gave by far the larger part of their time and energy to the production of plays. Spenser's masterpiece, indeed, is closer to the old romances of the past than to the dramas which were the delight of his own age, and while he is the first of the great Eliza-

bethans in time, in the nature of his genius and in the character of his work he stands among his great contemporaries almost alone.

**Life.** — Edmund Spenser was born in London in 1552, six years before the opening of the reign of Elizabeth. He belonged to a respectable Lancashire family. His father is believed to have been a journeyman cloth-maker, who came up to London shortly before the poet's birth. Whatever his ancestry may have been, Spenser's family had apparently but little means, and he was forced to make his own way in the world. He attended the Merchant Taylors' School, then just opened in London, as a "poor scholar." In 1569 he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, as a *sizar*, or one who is relieved of certain payments. While at college, Spenser studied Aristotle and Plato, the Greek and Latin poets, and parts at least of the literatures of France and Italy. There he became acquainted with Edmund Kirke, who afterwards wrote an introduction to *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and with Gabriel Harvey, who figures in the literary history of the time as a learned if somewhat formal and narrow-minded critic, deeply interested in the development of English poetry. Spenser left Cambridge, after taking his master's degree, in 1576, and spent two years in the north, probably with his kinsfolk in Lancashire.

**London. The Shepherd's Calendar.** — About 1579 Spenser settled in London, where he became acquainted with Sir Philip Sidney, the mirror and pattern of the English gentleman of the time. In 1579 Spenser published his *Shepherd's Calendar*, which he dedicated to Sidney, and which, tradition says, was written during a stay at Penshurst, Sidney's country-place. The poem received immediate recognition as a work which marked



the coming of a new and original poet. It is a pastoral poem in twelve books, one for each month of the year. Spenser hoped to push his fortunes at court, it seems, and to remain in England. He had Sidney's friendship, and he had won the patronage of the Earl of Leicester. It was probably through the influence of these powerful patrons that Spenser was appointed secretary to the new deputy sent by the Queen to govern Ireland. However this may be, in 1580 the young poet left the brilliant England of Elizabeth, with its gathering intellectual forces, for the barbarous and rebellious colony of Ireland. This event determined the course of Spenser's life, and largely, too, the nature of his work. In that lawless and miserable country he spent the rest of his days, except for brief visits to England; "banished," as he bitterly writes, "like wight forlorn, into that waste where [he] was quite forgot."

**Ireland.** — For eight years Spenser remained in Dublin, first in the capacity of secretary, and afterward as clerk in the Chancery Court. In 1588 he removed to the southwestern part of Ireland, within the present limits of County Cork, where, as a reward for his services, he had been given three thousand acres of the forfeited estates of the Earl of Desmond, with the old castle of Kilcolman. There, on the north shore of a lake, in the midst of a plain watered by the winding rivers Mulla and Bregog, and surrounded by hills and mountains, the poet lived his life of the imagination and wrote his masterpiece, *The Faërie Queene*. There Sir Walter Raleigh visited him,

"Amongst the coolly shade  
Of the green alders of the Mullæ's shore,"

and heard from the poet's own lips the first three books of the work. Raleigh, a poet himself, was filled with

admiration. He prevailed upon Spenser to go with him to court and bring his poem to the attention of the Queen. There was more than one reason why Elizabeth should look with favor upon the work. It was glorious poetry, and in one respect was perhaps the most elaborate compliment ever presented by a poet to his sovereign. It was dedicated to "The most high, mighty, and magnificent Empress," Elizabeth, "to live with the eternity of her fame;" it was a stupendous monument of flattery. The *Faërie Queene* herself was both the type of Glory and the special revelation of it in the person of the poet's "most excellent and glorious Sovereign." Moved by the merits of the poetry, or by the extravagance of the praise, Elizabeth rewarded Spenser with a pension of fifty pounds a year (which he is said to have found difficulty in collecting), and the first instalment of the *Faërie Queene* was published in 1590.

**Suitor at Court.** — Spenser remained in London about a year, learning the miseries of a suitor for princes' favors, and then returned in bitter indignation to his provincial seclusion. His keen sense of disappointment and neglect found utterance in a passage in *Mother Hubbard's Tale* (1591), which brings us very near to the inner life of the poet himself.

"Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,  
What hell it is, in suing long to bide:  
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;  
To wast long nights in pensive discontent;  
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;  
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;  
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;  
To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;  
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;  
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaïres;  
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,

To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.  
 Unhappie wight, borne to desastrous end,  
 That doth his life in so long tendance spend!"

It is not often that we are permitted to get so close to Spenser as in these words. They give us a glimpse into the true meaning of his experience. We see how he hated his exile in Ireland when we see what trouble he took to end it; and we can estimate more justly the effect of that dreary banishment on Spenser and his work. Shut out from all the excitement and rush of life that crowded Shakespeare's London, he turned from the repulsive coarseness and violence about him, to delight his soul in the languor and beauty of the Italy of the Renaissance. He withdrew into himself and into the world of fair imaginings, and he wove his gorgeous fancies into the *Faërie Queene*.

Spenser returned to Ireland in 1591, and wrote his *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*. In 1594 he married Elizabeth Boyer, "an Irish country lass," and paid her a poet's tribute in his *Amoretti*, or love sonnets, and in the splendid *Epithalamion*, or marriage hymn, a poem filled with a rich and noble music. Here also he wrote three more books of the twelve that were to make up the first part of the *Faërie Queene*. These Spenser took to London and published them in 1596. But Ireland seems to have been Spenser's doom. In 1598 he returned again to that misgoverned and perilous country which necessity had made his home. Shortly after, the miserable natives again rose in rebellion, and hordes of desperate men ravaged Munster. Spenser's castle was sacked and burnt. He and his wife managed to escape, and Spenser soon afterward went to London as bearer of despatches. Here he died (1599) in a lodging-house, a ruined and broken-hearted man.

**As Poet.** — One of the greatest poets of a great age, Spenser has little in common with his fellows but their love of beauty and their mastery of poetic expression. He lived in a time of great deeds and stirring events, when the brilliant and crowded procession of Elizabethan life, one would think, would have compelled the attention of every mind. But from this world of action Spenser was far removed. Not only the circumstances of his life, but his genius, led him into an unreal world of the imagination, an Arcadia where figures are shadowy and unsubstantial, — the figments of a poet's brain. Chaucer, whom Spenser called master, had, with the shrewdest of eyes, studied and painted to the life real men and women of fourteenth-century England. His Knight in the *Canterbury Tales* rode a good horse and wore a short cassock that had been soiled by his armor; the Prioress "wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous;" the Plowman "wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve." Shakespeare, too, with all his poetry, kept ever close to reality; his characters are nothing if they are not human. But Spenser leads us into a world of shining knights and distressed damsels, of dragons, fairies, and enchanters. In his work he follows many of the conventions of the old poets and the old romancers, and seems to look at life through art rather than at life itself. A great poet standing at the threshold of the modern world, Spenser turned to medieval allegory with its abstract figures, and to medieval romance with its endless adventures, when all about him his greatest contemporaries were giving their reading of life in the concrete forms and close-knit action of the drama.

**The Faërie Queene.** — This limitation is the more noticeable because in his great masterpiece, the *Faërie Queene*, Spenser aimed to be a teacher. He proposed

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to show in an allegory the conflict between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, self-indulgence and self-control. The different personages of the story represent the abstract virtues and vices; and the general purpose of the poem is "to fashion a perfect gentleman" by exhibiting a pattern of noble manhood and by showing the beauty of goodness and its final triumph. The poem is a long one, its six completed books occupying approximately four hundred pages of ninety lines each. In the first book, Falsehood, or Duessa, is overthrown, and the Red Cross Knight, the "righteous man," is united to truth, or Una. The remaining books are devoted to man's conquest of himself; to the conflict between his higher and his lower nature. But besides showing the general warfare between good and evil, which is common to all times, Spenser aimed to portray the specific form which that conflict had taken in his own age. The allegory is thus confused and complicated by the introduction of contemporary issues. Thus the struggle between the saintly Una and the dissembling Duessa represents both the eternal warfare between Truth and Falsehood, and the contemporary struggle between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. From time to time we dimly perceive the image of some great personage under this double veil of allegory, — of Mary, Queen of Scots, of Lord Grey, or Sir Philip Sidney, — until, in pure bewilderment, we often abandon all attempt to follow the poet's inner meaning and wander careless and delighted as in a world of dreams.

**The Poet of Beauty.** — Indeed, Spenser's poetry is memorable to-day for its descriptive beauty, its music, its wonderful richness and fluency of poetic utterance, rather than for the strength of its story or for its appli-

cability to life. Spenser lacked the dramatic instinct, and therefore his poem is, as a narrative, a failure. But this is not to deny it other merits. Spenser's genius was essentially pictorial; and in the *Faërie Queene* we are fascinated by the beauty, splendor, gloom, or grotesqueness, of a slowly moving pageant. It is, as some one called it, "a gallery of pictures." Spenser was a student of Plato, with a touch of Puritan severity; but he had, above all, the warm and beauty-loving temper of the Renaissance. Although there are passages that sound like trumpet-calls to high endeavor, passages full of lofty enthusiasm and of deep spiritual insight, the prevailing mood of the poem is that of sensuous delight in color, form, and music. No poet before Spenser had called out such sweet and stately music from our English speech, and none had so captivated by an appeal to the pure sense of beauty. Both of these elements are to be found in almost any stanza:

"And more to lulle him in his slumber soft,  
A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe,  
And ever-drizling raine upon the loft,  
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne  
Of swarming Bees, did cast him in a swowne.  
No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,  
As still are wont t' annoy the walled towne,  
Might there be heard; but carelesse Quiet lyes  
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enemyes." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This quotation is an example of the famous *Spenserian stanza*, a poetic form invented by Spenser and since used by some of the greatest of English poets. The student should examine its structure, — the number of accents in each line, the sequence of the rimes, — and should note particularly the length of the last line, which is called an *Alexandrine*. It is upon this last line, which prolongs the sound and seems at the same time to give unity and finish to the whole, that much of the music of the stanza depends.

These qualities make Spenser "the poet's poet." With him the mind can enter the land of faërie, the realm of dreams, and, luxuriating in beauty, steep itself in forgetfulness of the world's harsh and ugly realities. Though Spenser's remoteness from life makes his poetry less effective and less satisfying as the mind matures, we can always find in its loveliness a refreshing stimulus to the imagination, and the calming, refining influence of exquisite art.

### THE ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare is so much a part of our English civilization, we accept his gift to us so easily, and are so familiar with his greatness, that it is well to remind ourselves of his place as the king of all literature. Thomas Carlyle wrote of him: "I think the best judgment, not of this country only but of Europe at large, is pointing to the conclusion that Shakespeare is the chief of all poets hitherto; the greatest intellect, who, in our recorded world, has left a record of himself in the way of literature;" and Emerson says, speaking for our own branch of the English people: "Of all books dependent upon their intrinsic excellence, Shakespeare is the one book of the world. Out of the circle of religious books, I set Shakespeare as the one unparalleled mind." Criticism cannot explain how or why the country-bred son of a Warwickshire trader should have possessed this supreme gift; it is the miracle of genius; but we can partly understand how surrounding conditions favored the expression of Shakespeare's genius through a dramatic form. Let us look at Shakespeare in the light of some of those surroundings in which his genius worked.

**Shakespeare Part of a Dramatic Period.** — Shakespeare lived in the midst of one of the world's few great dramatic periods — a period equaled only, if equaled at all, by the greatest epoch in the drama of Greece. The Elizabethan drama was more than a national amusement. More fully than any other form of literary or artistic expression, it interpreted and satisfied the craving of the time for vigorous life and action. The theater was then, as in classic Greece, a national force, and a means of national education. An immense popular impulse was back of the Elizabethan dramatist. The wooden playhouses were daily filled with turbulent crowds, and scores of playwrights were busy supplying the insatiable public with countless dramas. Shakespeare was sustained by a hearty, if not always a discriminating, appreciation; he was stimulated by the fellowship, or rivalry, of a host of competitors. The number of readers was still small; there were few book-buyers outside of a little coterie of noblemen and scholars. Under these conditions it was impossible to make a living by writing unless one wrote for the stage. It was the dramatist who enjoyed the public patronage, the dramatist who received the most substantial rewards; and an almost irresistible current impelled young literary aspirants, the men of genius and the men of talent, to choose the dramatic form.

**Preparation for the Elizabethan Drama.** — At first sight, this dramatic activity may seem to have sprung suddenly into being in answer to a new popular demand. The first regular tragedy was produced about the time of Shakespeare's birth, and he was twelve years old before the first theater was erected in England (1576).

But the passion for life and action did not create the Elizabethan drama out of nothing; it rather transformed



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and adapted to its use a drama which had for centuries been an important part of the nation's life. This drama, brought into England some time after the Norman Conquest, had its origin in the Church; and as the Church



Representation of a Miracle Play

services were in Latin, the drama was at first in Latin also. For a long time it dealt exclusively with religious and moral themes, and had grown out of the need which the Church felt for some means of popular religious instruction. It was not *regular* drama, but existed at

first as part of the Church service on special occasions. At Easter, for example, during the singing of the mass, four priests, representing the angel and the three women bearing spices, acted simply and reverently the scene at the Holy Sepulcher. Later, other stories from the Bible and legends of the saints were represented in short scenes or plays, independently of the Church service. These gradually passed out of the hands of the clergy, and came to be acted (about 1350) in English, the language of the people, by members of the craft guilds, usually on movable platforms drawn through the streets of the larger towns. These plays were called *Miracle Plays*, because they dealt with wonderful or supernatural subjects. In some towns, as York and Chester, a complete *cycle* of such plays was given, representing the Bible story in a continuous series from the Creation or the Fall of Satan to Doomsday. Each guild presented a scene, — the shipwrights, for example, the building of the ark; the fishers and mariners, Noah and the flood. The platform on which the players acted was called a *pageant*, and resembled a huge box on wheels, divided into two stories or tiers. The lower story was commonly enclosed by curtains and was used as a dressing-room; the upper, which was open at the sides, was the stage. The spectators assembled in groups at various places in the town, at the street corners, the town-cross, or the gates, and the pageants were drawn from group to group. Each pageant performed only one play in the series, and as one pageant followed another in regular succession, each group of spectators would, by remaining at the same spot, see the whole series of plays. Sometimes scaffolds were used instead of the movable stages. Naturally this drama, which was popular in all parts of England —

especially during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, — was very real, to actors and spectators alike. It was the expression of their most vital beliefs; and yet, though its purpose and subject were religious, it contained certain purely comic and essentially human elements which led to the later development of the non-religious drama.

**The Moral Play or Morality.** — Beside the Miracle play, there was another kind of play with a religious purpose, the *Moral Play* or *Morality*. Its object was to teach a moral lesson by showing in the form of an allegory every man's lifelong struggle with the various temptations which are the common enemies of mankind. Instead of telling the story of the Bible in whole or in part, the Moral Play taught the difference between abstract right and wrong. In the *Castle of Perseverance*, for example, we see the hero, who represents Mankind, attended by a good and an evil angel; we see him yielding to various temptations, — personified as the World, Pleasure, Folly, and the like, — and finally saved through repentance and confession. The moral play of *Everyman* forces home upon the mind and conscience of the hearer a conviction of the shortness of human life and of the vanity of merely earthly interests. The almost unequalled power of this play consists in the universal importance of its theme. The experience of Everyman is, or will be, ours; each hearer moves toward the grave with him, and sees in his struggles and shortcomings the image of his own.

The earliest moral play extant dates from the reign of Henry VI (1422–1461), but mention is made of some still earlier.

**Interludes.** — A third kind of play that preceded the regular drama was the *Interlude*, a short scene or dia-

logue, often played between (*interludo*) the courses of a banquet, or between two serious scenes in a miracle play. The interlude existed for the pleasure, not the instruction, of the spectator, and hence in purpose was like the later drama rather than the older miracle or moral plays. The speakers in these witty conversations are not personifications as in the moralities; they are characters taken from real life, as *Johan the husband* and *Tyb his wife*, a *Pardoner*, a *Friar*, or a *Curate*. The most important interludes were composed by JOHN HEYWOOD (1500–1565), a wit, musician, and poet of Henry VIII's court, and were produced before the king as independent plays.

The importance of the religious drama is brought home to us when we note that it existed in England for approximately five hundred years. It began shortly after the Norman Conquest and was not entirely displaced until after the time of Shakespeare's youth. In the period of its greatest popularity it went almost wherever the Church went. Plays of the medieval type were performed in one hundred and twenty-five recorded places in England, Ireland, and Scotland. They were acted in Edinburgh, in Aberdeen, in Dublin; and even in Cornwall, in the Cornish tongue. They were one of the most important means of popular education.

**Relation of Miracle and Moral Plays to the Elizabethan Drama.** — This early drama, although full of interest for the student, has, as a rule, but little poetic merit. Yet the miracle and morality plays, with all their uncouthness and deficiencies, were sustained and elevated by their stupendous themes; they dealt with issues so universal, that later dramatists could hardly escape treating them again, although in a different form. In fact there is a very real and vital relation between

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the miracle and morality plays and the Elizabethan drama. We find allusions to this older drama in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights, and here and there we come upon an actual thread of connection. The *Vice*, who, dressed as a Court fool, supplied the comic element in the morality plays, survives in a more elevated form in Shakespeare's clowns and jesters. But above all we must remember that for hundreds of years before Marlowe and Shakespeare, this religious drama fostered and kept alive a love of play-going among the English people. It made the drama a national amusement, a popular possession. These early plays, essentially serious and moral, changed and supplemented as they were by the new ideas and fresh inspiration brought by the Renaissance, were a basis for the drama of later time.

**Beginning of the Regular Drama.** — In making the transition from the Interlude to the regular drama — which was characterized by fuller development of plot and by more careful division into acts and scenes — England was helped by the example of the classic, and particularly of the Latin, writers. The first regular comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister* (about 1540), by Nicholas Udall, was written in imitation of the Latin comic dramatist Plautus; the first tragedy, *Gorboduc*, or *Ferrex and Porrex* (acted 1561), by Sackville and Norton, while it dealt with a subject in the legendary history of England, followed the style of the Latin tragic poet Seneca. But the forces creating the drama in England were too strong and original to make it a mere classic imitation. The comedy of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, a coarse and graphic study of rustic life, was produced about 1552–53. It is significant that this little play is truly English, both in matter and in spirit. The English drama might

borrow from Rome or Italy, but it had originality and character of its own.

**Patriotism and the Drama.** — Among the native forces thus shaping a new drama out of medieval miracle plays or classic adaptations was the intense patriotic pride which, in the days of the Spanish Armada, stirred England to a deep interest in her history. Antiquarians and historians were searching the old chronicles, and relating the story of England's past. Poets told of England's glory in long narrative and descriptive poems, or in ballads celebrating great victories. All these writers were bidding people

"Look on England,  
The Empress of the European isles,  
The mistress of the ocean, her navies  
Putting a girdle round about the world."

Naturally this interest in England's past found expression in the drama. Among the early works of this class are, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, acted before 1588, and *The Troublesome Raign of King John*, printed in 1591. From these we pass to a higher order of drama in *Edward II*, by Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare's great predecessor, until we reach the climax of England's patriotic drama in the work of Shakespeare himself. The English historical drama was thus a native growth brought into being by a genuine national impulse.

**Shakespeare's Predecessors.** — Under these circumstances the Elizabethan drama took its rise. About 1580 we find the drama rapidly taking form in London through the work of a group of rising dramatists, a number of whom brought from the universities a tincture of the new learning. Many of these playwrights lived in a wild, Bohemian fashion, haunting low taverns, and consorting with the vilest company. Their means

of living were uncertain, for literature was not yet a recognized profession. Some of them wrote romances, poems, or pamphlets, as well as plays. Some of them were mere literary adventurers: scholars acquainted with the London slums, the associates of actors, if not actors themselves, struggling to live by their wits as best they could.

JOHN LYLY (1553–1606) is the first of this group. His plays were produced by two companies of child-actors known as "the children of Paul's" (*i.e.* the choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral) and "the children of the Chapel" (*i.e.* the choristers of the Royal Chapel at Whitehall), and they were undoubtedly acted before the Queen. Lyly's plays were noted more for their rhetoric than for their poetry. In fact, Lyly first became famous by a certain artificial and highly rhetorical prose, known as *Euphuism*, from his two stories, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* (1579), and *Euphues and His England* (1580). Euphuism as a manner of writing and speaking, it seems, was much imitated at the Court, becoming almost a fad. GEORGE PEELE (1558–1597) likewise wrote plays for the Court, but he wrote also for the public theaters. In his dramas he gave full expression to a strong poetic genius. THOMAS KYD (1558–1595) was famous for his *Spanish Tragedy*, which, though not without dramatic power, was poetically inferior to the best work of Kyd's contemporaries. ROBERT GREENE (1558–1592), in his *Scottish History of King James IV* and his pleasing comedy of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, gives us two plays which in part suggest the romantic comedies of Shakespeare. The scene of the latter play is laid in the country, and there is in it a wholesome atmosphere of sunshine and open air. Greene has left us the story of his pitiable life in his singular tract, *A Groat's Worth of Wit Bought*

*with a Million of Repentance.* It was a sordid and dissipated life among the outcasts of London society; but in the midst of debauchery and riot he kept a mind open to the influence of higher and finer things; and his drama is free from the taint of his habits.

**Christopher Marlowe.**— But greater than all these in the tragic intensity of his genius and the swelling majesty of his “mighty line” was CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564–1593), the immediate forerunner of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare’s closest rival in dramatic construction and poetic power. When Marlowe began to write, the form of the English drama was still unsettled. Under the influence of its classic models tragedy was inclined to be stilted and formal; while in contrast with the work of the scholarly and somewhat artificial writers there were rude, popular interludes in jingling rimes, full of rough, clownish tricks and jests. Marlowe did much to reduce this confusion to order and to introduce new themes for dramatic treatment. His verse is the finest before Shakespeare’s; and stormy and riotous as was his life, his work shows the true artist’s unselfish devotion to a high and beautiful ideal. Marlowe was the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, and was born two months before Shakespeare. He graduated at Cambridge and came to London in 1581 to plunge into the vortex of reckless and lawless life that circled round the theater. Passionate, unquiet, ambitious, Marlowe was spoken of, though it seems unjustly, as an atheist and a blasphemer. He died before he reached thirty; stabbed, we are told, in a low tavern at Deptford. The touch of the unknown, which he thirsted for like his own *Faustus*, stopped him in the midst of his doubts, his passionate longings, his defiance, his love-making, and his fame — and at length he was but “poor deceased Kit Marlowe.”



**His Dramas.** — Marlowe's dramas, like Shakespeare's, show a gradual development toward artistic perfection. Though all are stamped with genius and certain magnificent bursts of poetry, the earliest are marred in part by exaggeration and extravagance. Yet into most of his plays Marlowe succeeded in throwing genuine tragic passion. He was the first of the Elizabethan dramatists to give his work universal interest, for he was the first to paint with power and truth through the medium of genuine and exalted poetry the sterner and more awful passions of man.

Marlowe's earliest play, *Tamburlaine* (1587), portrays the insatiable thirst for power, the spirit of the typical conqueror longing for "the sweet fruition of an earthly crown." Another of Marlowe's tragedies, *The Jew of Malta*, is generally thought to have furnished Shakespeare with some hints for his Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*; while *Dr. Faustus*, with the accumulating terror of its tragic close, is full of that longing for the unattainable which seems to have been the strongest characteristic of Marlowe's restless nature. In these famous lines from *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe himself seems to speak to us:

"Nature, that framed us of four elements  
Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds;  
Our souls whose faculties can comprehend  
The wondrous architecture of the world,  
And measure every wandering planet's course,  
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
And always moving as the restless spheres,  
Will us to wear-ourselves and never rest —."

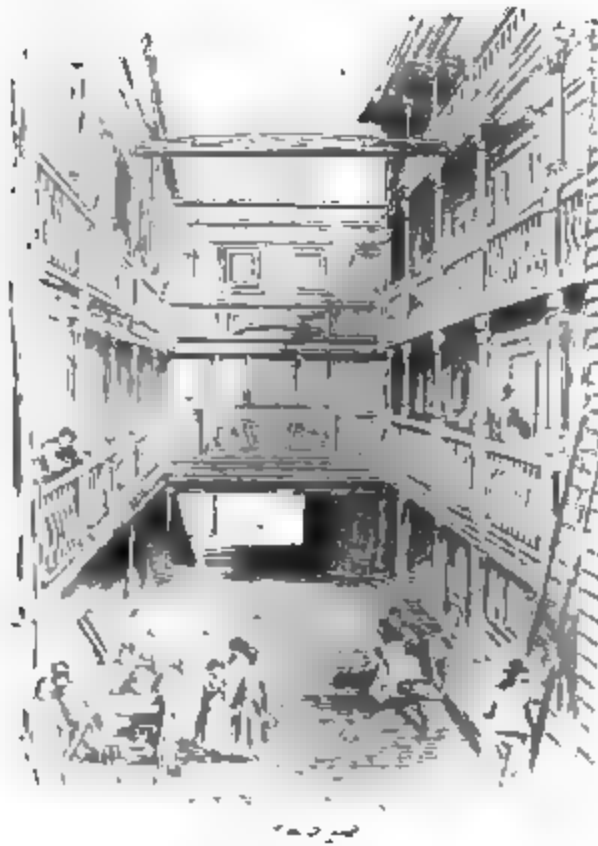
In Marlowe's *Edward II* we have the first great historical tragedy produced in England. The play is a

picture, clearly and truly drawn, of a weak king who is forced with tragic pride and reluctance to give up his crown and finally his life. Here Marlowe is distinctively the predecessor of Shakespeare as a master of historical tragedy. Charles Lamb has said of this play, "the death-scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted."

**Theaters.** — For the production of so many plays on such varied subjects, one might suppose many theaters would be needed in London even before Shakespeare's time. But we must remember that the development of the playhouse, like that of the drama, was gradual. Indeed, plays were acted in England long before any theaters were built. The interludes or the early dramas were often played before the Queen in the royal palace, or before some great noble on a platform at one end of the huge hall, perhaps at a great banquet or festival. And when plays became a popular pastime, they were often performed in the open courtyards of the inns, such as the Bull, the Bell, and the Cross Keys in London. These square inn-yards, overlooked by the balconies which ran around the enclosing walls of the inn, are supposed to have furnished the model for the regular theaters. The growing delight in play-going seems to have produced a general demand for more permanent and roomy accommodations. The first building devoted especially to plays was *The Theatre*, erected in 1576 in Shoreditch, just outside of London. The Puritan citizens of London at first opposed the production of plays and the building of theaters within the city walls; plays were godless, they said, and not only caused disturbances of the peace, but increased the danger of the plague. The first theater built in London proper was *The Blackfriars*

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(1596). From this time the playhouses increased rapidly. Shakespeare's theater, *The Globe*, built in 1599, lay across the Thames on the Bankside in Southwark, near London bridge. Other famous theaters of the day were *The Curtain*, *The Rose*, *The Swan*, and *The Fortune*. *The Swan* was the largest and finest. It was

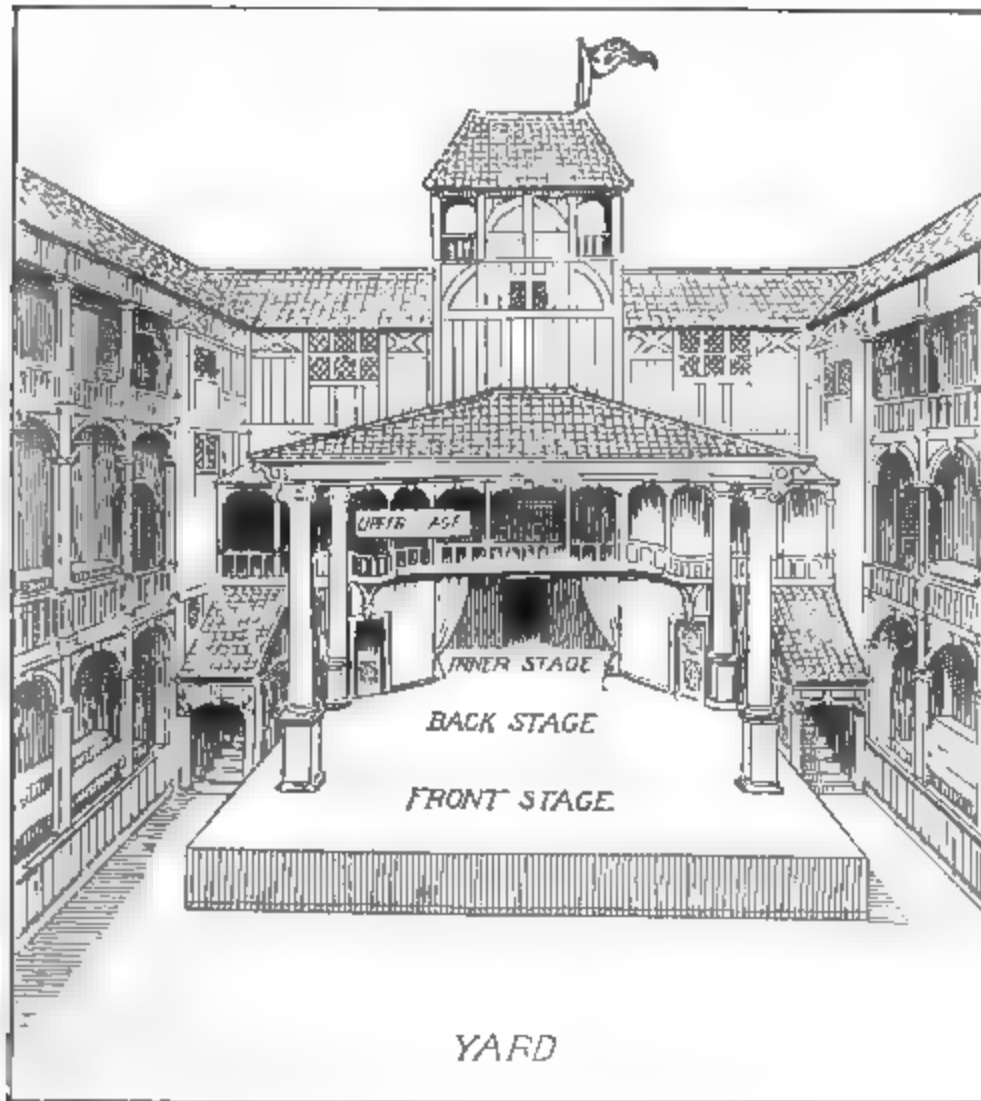


Elizabethan Tavern, Four Swans,  
showing evolution of the theater

built, we are told, of "a concrete of flint-stones," and it had wooden columns painted in imitation of marble. The theaters were of two kinds, public and private. The first were large four-or six-sided buildings, partly roofed over above the stage, that the costumes of the players, which were often costly, might be protected from the weather. The greater part of the stage, however, on which the principal action

in the drama took place, was uncovered and extended into the yard. The pit or yard was open to sun and rain. Galleries ran round the walls as in the inn-yards. The stage projected into the pit, which was alive with disorderly crowds who stood on the bare ground, joking, fighting, or shoving to gain the best places. A penny admission was charged, and if a young gallant wished

to sit on the stage, he could get "a good stool for sixpence." There, with others of his kind, seated likewise or lying on the rushes, he would smoke, lay wagers,



Interior of Fortune Theater

or play cards, and sometimes interrupt the play by loud laughing or talking, even in the midst of a tragic part.

There was some attempt at scenery in the Elizabethan theaters; a painted canvas was hung as a cloud, or run on grooves to represent a house or a wall; and in one play, given at Oxford in 1605, there were three changes

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of scene.<sup>1</sup> The costumes and hangings were usually of the most elegant and costly kind, but the stage effects were in general crude and inadequate. In the old plays we find such significant stage directions as these: "Exit Venus; or, if you can conveniently, let a chair come down from the top of the stage and draw her up." In more than one place in the choruses of *Henry V*, Shakespeare seems to be impatient of the slender resources of his stage-setting, as when he asks:

"Can this cock-pit hold  
The vasty fields of France? or may we cram  
Within this wooden O the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?"

And in the wonderful description that precedes the battle of Agincourt he complains:

"And so our scene must to the battle fly;  
Where (O for pity!) we shall much disgrace  
With four or five most vile and ragged foils,  
Right ill-disposed, in brawl ridiculous —  
The name of Agincourt. Yet, sit and see,  
Minding true things by what their mockeries be."

The private theaters were smaller and more comfortable than the public. They had seats in the pit and were entirely under roof. Performances were given by candle or torch light, and the audiences were usually more select. The following description by J. A. Symonds gives us a vivid notion of the performance of a play in Shakespeare's time: "Let us imagine that the red-lettered play-bill of a new tragedy has been hung out beneath the picture of Dame Fortune [*i.e.* at 'The Fortune' Theater, the great rival of Shakespeare's theater,

<sup>1</sup> F. E. Schelling, *Elizabethan Drama*, I, p. 172.

'The Globe' ]; the flag is flying from the roof, the drums have beaten, and the trumpets are sounding for the second time. It is three o'clock upon an afternoon of summer. We pass through the great door, ascend some steps, take our key from the pocket of our trunk hose, and let ourselves into our private room on the first or lowest tier. We find ourselves in a low, square building, not unlike a circus; smelling of sawdust and the breath of people. The yard below is crowded with simpering mechanics and 'prentices in greasy leather jerkins, servants in blue frieze, with their master's badges on their shoulders, boys and grooms elbowing each other for bare standing ground and passing jests on their neighbours. Five or six young men are already seated before the curtain playing cards and cracking nuts to while away the time. A boy goes up and down among them offering various qualities of tobacco for sale, and furnishing lights for the smokers. The stage itself is strewn with rushes; and from the jutting tiled roof of the shadow, supported by a couple of stout wooden pillars, carved with satyrs at the top, hangs a curtain of tawny-colored silk. This is drawn when the trumpets have sounded for the third time, and an actor in a black velvet mantle, with a crown of bays upon his flowing wig, struts forward, bowing to the audience. He is the Prologue."

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1564–1616)

"I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped."

— BEN JONSON.

"His mind and his hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

— HEMINGE and CONDELL, Editors of the First Folio  
edition of the Plays (1623).

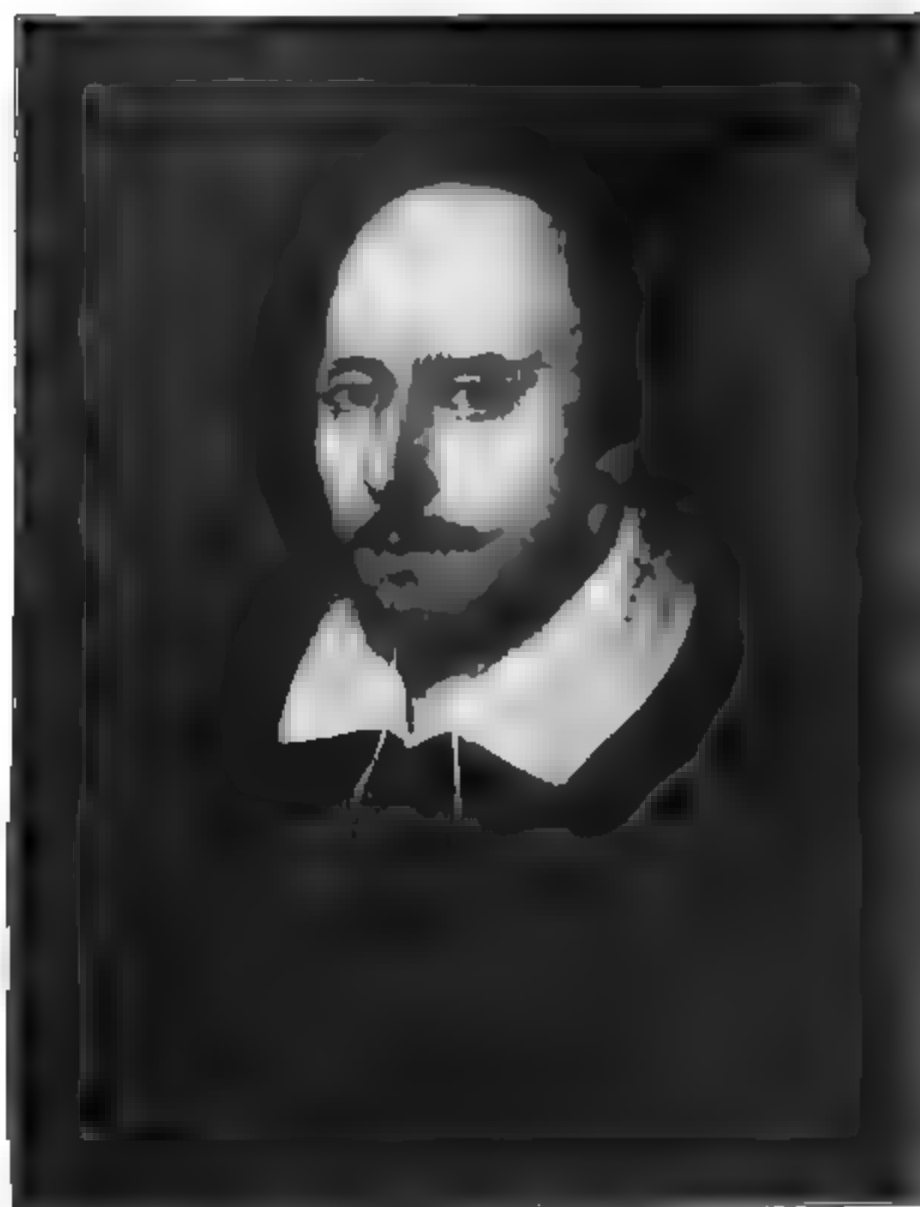
"The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare."

— DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

"The greatest genius that perhaps human nature has yet produced, our *myriad-minded* Shakespeare."

— SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

**Early Surroundings.** — There is on Henley Street, in Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, an old house, with gabled roof and low-ceilinged rooms, which every year is made the object of thousands of pilgrimages. Here William Shakespeare was born, on or about the twenty-third day of April, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, the son of a small farmer in the neighboring village of Snitterfield, added to his regular business of glover sundry dealings in wool, corn, and hides, and possibly the occupation of butcher. His mother, Mary Arden, the daughter of a wealthy farmer near Stratford, was connected with one of the oldest and most distinguished families in Warwickshire. The Ardens came of both Norman and Saxon blood, and thus represented "the



**William Shakespeare**  
**From the Chandos portrait in the National Portrait Gallery**





two great race elements that have gone to the making of the typical modern Englishman." The influences about Shakespeare's youth were such as growing genius naturally adapts to its use. Then, as now, Warwickshire was full of that abundant and peaceful beauty which has come to represent for us the ideal English landscape. In Shakespeare's day its northern part was



Mary Arden's Cottage

overgrown by the great forest of Arden, a bit of primeval woodland like that which we enter in *As You Like It*; while southward of the river Avon, which runs diagonally across the county, stretched an open region of fertile farmland. Here were warm, sunny slopes, gay with those wild flowers that bloom forever for the world in Shakespeare's verse; low-lying pastures, where meditative cows stand knee-deep in grass, and through which wind the brimming waters of slow-flowing and tranquil streams. Stratford lies in this more southern portion;

but in Shakespeare's day the forest of Arden reached to within an easy distance of it for an active youth. Near his native town the young Shakespeare could loiter along country lanes, past hawthorn hedgerows or orchards white with May, coming now and then on some isolated farmhouse or on the cluster of thatched cottages that marked a tiny village. There was Snitterfield, where he must have gone to visit his grandfather; Shottery, where he wooed and won Anne Hathaway. There, in the midst of this rich midland scenery, was his own Stratford with its low wood-and-plaster houses and straggling streets, its massive grammar school, where, as a boy, he conned his Lilly's *Latin Grammar*. A little apart, by the glassy Avon, stood old Trinity Church, its lofty spire rising above the surrounding elms. There is abundant evidence that Shakespeare loved Warwickshire with a depth of attachment that nothing could alter. These early surroundings entered into and became a permanent part of his life and genius. His works are full of country sights and sounds; he defines for us the essence of the ideal shepherd's life; and in many a song, written to be sung in crowded London theaters, his imagination escapes to the fields and flowers of his native Warwickshire.

And Shakespeare's Warwickshire added to natural beauty the charm of local legend and the traditions of a splendid past. Within easy reach of Stratford lay Warwick, with its fine old castle, once the home of the great king-maker of the Wars of the Roses. The whole region was bound by tradition and association to that great civil strife which is one of the chief themes of Shakespeare's plays on English history. Near by was Kenilworth, the castle of Elizabeth's favorite, the Earl of Leicester, where the Queen was received (1575) with

magnificent revels, at which the boy Shakespeare may have been present. Traveling companies of players seem to have visited Stratford during Shakespeare's early years, whose performances he doubtless witnessed. He may even have gazed at the wonders of a miracle play at Coventry, a town some twenty miles distant, where these plays were frequently produced by the guilds.

**Education.** — Besides all that he gained from such surroundings and experiences, Shakespeare had the advantage of some instruction at the town grammar school, which he probably entered in 1571, when he was seven years old. Latin was the chief study, and it is reasonably certain that Shakespeare, who remained at school about six years, gained a fair elementary knowledge of the language. By 1577 his father, who had been prosperous and respected, began to be pressed for money, and about this time Shakespeare was taken from school. The boy, then about thirteen, may have helped his father in the business. According to an old account he was "apprenticed to a butcher." However this may have been, it is practically certain that he made himself useful in some way, and that his school life was interrupted because his help was needed at home. Just how the young Shakespeare earned his bread at this time is, after all, comparatively unimportant; our real interest is in the boy himself, and the most remarkable thing we note of him is that even as a boy he had the power of observing closely and accurately the facts of the life about him. The country life of Warwickshire, its flowers and birds, its hedgerows and woodlands, the oddities of its rustics, and the narrow self-importance of its local authorities were indelibly impressed upon his memory and afterwards used in his plays. We need

not wonder how it happened that he who spent so few years at school became the greatest of English poets. Shakespeare was never what the world calls a learned man, nor a traveled man, but something far greater, a man "with his whole soul seeing." Although he had but little schooling, he was, in the best sense of the words, highly educated. He hungered for a knowledge of life, and his marvelously sensitive mind and quick intuition gathered it from every possible source. He was quick to respond to the beauty, the pathos, the comedy, and the tragedy that lay around him. This was his school. His simple neighbors, his homely duties, his rustic pleasures, gave him his first materials for his art. Afterward, when he went to London, the world of books was opened to him, and we may be sure that there the ardent youth read eagerly and rapidly the many Italian stories and novels which, as one writer of the time says, were "sold in every shop in London." He read, too, pamphlets and poems on topics of the day, which young, clever, versatile writers were issuing in great numbers. Here he read Chaucer, and Plutarch's great book, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, and Holinshed's *Chronicles*, in which he found the ancient stories of *King Lear* and *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline*. These books and others Shakespeare fixed in his memory, and made their thought his own. He was one who with unerring instinct sought in books that which is human.

**Marriage.** — Our knowledge of Shakespeare's life during the period of boyhood and youth leads us to imagine that he was not merely the dreamy and meditative spectator of life, but rather one who flung himself into its varied experiences with zest and vigor. We are rather led to think of him in these early years as hot-

headed, passionate, even, perhaps, as a trifle lawless, as "a man whose blood is warm within." In 1582, when he was only eighteen, and in spite of his father's straitened circumstances, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years older than himself. Three or four years later he left his wife and children and went to London to wrestle with Fortune; coming, "as others do," to try against the great "General Challenger" the strength of his youth. According to an old tradition, the immediate reason for Shakespeare's leaving Stratford was his quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy, a neighboring landed proprietor, in whose park Shakespeare, with some other "young fellows," had been stealing deer. Whether this story be true or not, Shakespeare's going to London is exactly what his circumstances would lead us to expect. In 1585 he had a wife and three children to support, his father's money affairs had gone from bad to worse, and Shakespeare, strong as we may imagine in the hopes and confidence of youth and genius, had every reason to feel the country village of Stratford too cramped for his powers.

"The spirit of a youth  
That means to be of note, begins betimes."

**Shakespeare in London.** — When Shakespeare reached London (1587?) the drama was rapidly gaining in popular favor; clever young playwrights were giving it form, and Marlowe had recently produced his *Tamburlaine*. Shakespeare became an actor, and made a place for himself among the crowd of struggling dramatists. He became a member of a leading company of players, the "Lord Chamberlain's Company," and by 1592 had fairly entered upon a prosperous career.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At this time actors of any standing were organized in companies. These companies were licensed, and many of them bore the name

**Shakespeare's Work.** — In studying the dramas of Shakespeare it is important to realize that Shakespeare did not at once reach perfection in his art. Though he is often called the greatest of English writers, he, as other less able men have done, served an apprenticeship in his profession, and went through a gradual and normal development which can partly be traced in his plays. It is not true, as is sometimes said, that Shakespeare's work is flawless. His early dramas, naturally, lack the depth of insight and intensity of passion that are characteristic of his mature work; yet even in the first plays there are flashes of genius that give promise of his later style. Shakespeare seems to have begun his dramatic career in London by remodeling former plays, adding new scenes or rewriting old ones according to the needs of the theater. He was learning his art by practical experience, and in immediate touch with the stage. *Titus Andronicus*, a coarse and brutal tragedy, was probably one of the plays not his own thus touched up. But soon Shakespeare began writing entire dramas, at first on the model of the Latin or Italian comedies, as *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and afterward independently, according to his own invention. The poetic fantasy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is of this latter class. It easily rises above the other comedies of this early period in breadth of conception, imagination, beauty, and suggestiveness. The characters in it have been more carefully studied and more naturally drawn. Theseus, the Duke, has an heroic largeness of stature, a nobility which leads us to place him with Shakespeare's great men of action.

of some great nobleman. Thus there was the Earl of Leicester's Company, the Lord Admiral's Company, etc. The Queen's Company had obtained its license from the Queen herself.

Here, too, is Bully Bottom, the incarnation of arrogant, uncomprehending common sense, solidly established in the midst of Shakespeare's filmy and gossamer world of imaginations and dreams.

These early plays (not all of which have been mentioned) constitute the first period in Shakespeare's career as a playwright, the period of apprenticeship, or as Professor Dowden has called it, "in the workshop." Of this time also are the two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593), and *Lucrece* (1594).

**Historical Plays.** — From this world of high imagination and homespun fact, Shakespeare turned to the story of England's past. In 1594 he produced *Richard II*, and the other plays of his great English historical series followed in quick succession. Begun a few years after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, these plays reflect the triumphant patriotism of the time. They are not merely nobly patriotic, they are above all broadly human. They show us the usurper Henry IV sleepless in his lonely power, and the jolly roisterers in the taverns of Eastcheap; the aspiring Hotspur, who would "pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;" and the fat, comfortable, companionable Jack Falstaff, glorified by kindness and humor, to whom "honour" is but a word. We are shown the incapable Richard II with his strain of poetry and sentiment, and the hero-king Henry V, the doer of great deeds.

**Later Comedies.** — After the completion of this series of historical studies, Shakespeare again turned to comedy. The witty and brilliant *Much Ado About Nothing*, with its inimitable Dogberry and its touch of tragedy, the woodland pastoral *As you Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, were written during this time. In the plays of this second period the tide of youth runs full



and joyously. Life has not as yet shown to the poet its darker, more tragic side. He had, indeed, written *Romeo and Juliet*, that rapturous and romantic tragedy of ill-fated love, and *The Merchant of Venice*, with its pathetic figure of Shylock. He had composed *The Rape of Lucrece*, in which the brightness and joy of out-of-doors and the ardent poetry found in the *Venus and Adonis* are replaced by the gloom of darker passion and crime, and by greater depth of meditation and thought. But the prevailing notes of the early work were those of free and even boisterous laughter, and unbroken, happily ending love.

**Shakespeare's Tragic Period.** — Toward the close of the sixteenth century, however, a change begins to be apparent in the spirit of Shakespeare's work. As early probably as 1594, Shakespeare had begun to write a series of *Sonnets*, all of which are steeped in profound feeling. In the later of these we see a foreshadowing of Shakespeare's tragic mood. We read in them of a conflict between love and duty, of the passing of youth, of the death of friends, "hid in death's dateless night," of a profound disgust for a world in which evil is captain over good. *Twelfth Night*, although written a little later than the greater part of the *Sonnets*, is a rollicking comedy. The solemn Malvolio is the butt of the jolly, drunken Sir Toby and the quick-witted Maria. Yet even in this play the mirth is not wholly careless. The note of warning mingles with the clown's song: "What's to come is still unsure;" love is not "hereafter," seize it now, for —

"Youth's a stuff will not endure."

The words seem at least prophetic. In the same year in which he wrote *Twelfth Night* (1601), Shakespeare

began in *Julius Cæsar* that great series of plays which won him a place among the supreme tragic poets of the world. In play after play we now find him turning from the humorous and gayer side of life to face the ultimate problems of existence, and to sound the depths of human weakness, agony, and crime. How far these great tragedies were wrought out of the suffering and bitterness of Shakespeare's own experience, and how far they were the result merely of the deepening and strengthening of Shakespeare's character, will never, in all likelihood, be determined. The vital thing is, that, from whatever cause, Shakespeare appears to have passed through a period of spiritual conflict.

**His Studies of Sin.** — It is evident that the thought of Shakespeare in these plays is largely occupied with the great fact of sin; sin, not in its relation to a life hereafter, but sin as it is in this present world. In *Macbeth* we are present at the ruin of a soul, standing irresolute at the brink of the first crime and then hurrying recklessly from guilt to guilt; in *Othello* we see the helplessness of a "noble nature" in the hands of fiendish ingenuity and malice; Hamlet and Ophelia, the "fair rose of May," perish with the guilty King and Queen; the outcast Lear, "more sinned against than sinning," and his one faithful daughter, Cordelia, fall victims to a monstrous wickedness. Shakespeare views evil fearlessly and reports it honestly, and yet in the awful world of crime portrayed in these tragedies there is room for figures and examples of virtue and holiness. Our conception of the worth and dignity of life is raised, our ideals purified and ennobled, by the contemplation of the heroic in Shakespeare's world. Cordelia, Virgilia, Miranda, and Portia elevate and sanctify our thoughts of womanhood by their loveliness and purity. The

faithfulness of Kent in *King Lear*, and the Roman constancy of Horatio in *Hamlet*, inspire us with admiration of manly virtue. "Shakespeare," says Coleridge, "is an author, of all others, calculated to make his readers better as well as wiser." He shows us there is nothing so loathsome as sin, nothing so beautiful as goodness. He shows us that high endeavor, greatness, and innocence cannot really fail so long as they remain true to themselves, because they are their own exceeding great reward. Shakespeare does not explain the dark riddle of life; he does say with unequaled earnestness, "Woe unto them that call darkness light, and light darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

Yet with all his stern condemnation of sin, Shakespeare pours out over the faults and frailties of the erring creatures he has made the fullness of a marvelous tenderness and pity. Through all of his work, this compassion for human weakness, this large-hearted sympathy with human failures and mistakes, sheds a gracious and kindly light; but in two plays, *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*, the need of mercy is given an especial prominence. In the first, Isabella, imploring mercy for her condemned brother, exclaims:

"Alas! Alas!  
Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;  
And He that might the vantage best have took  
Found out the remedy. How would you be,  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are?"

And in the same spirit, Portia declares:

"That in the course of justice none of us  
Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy."

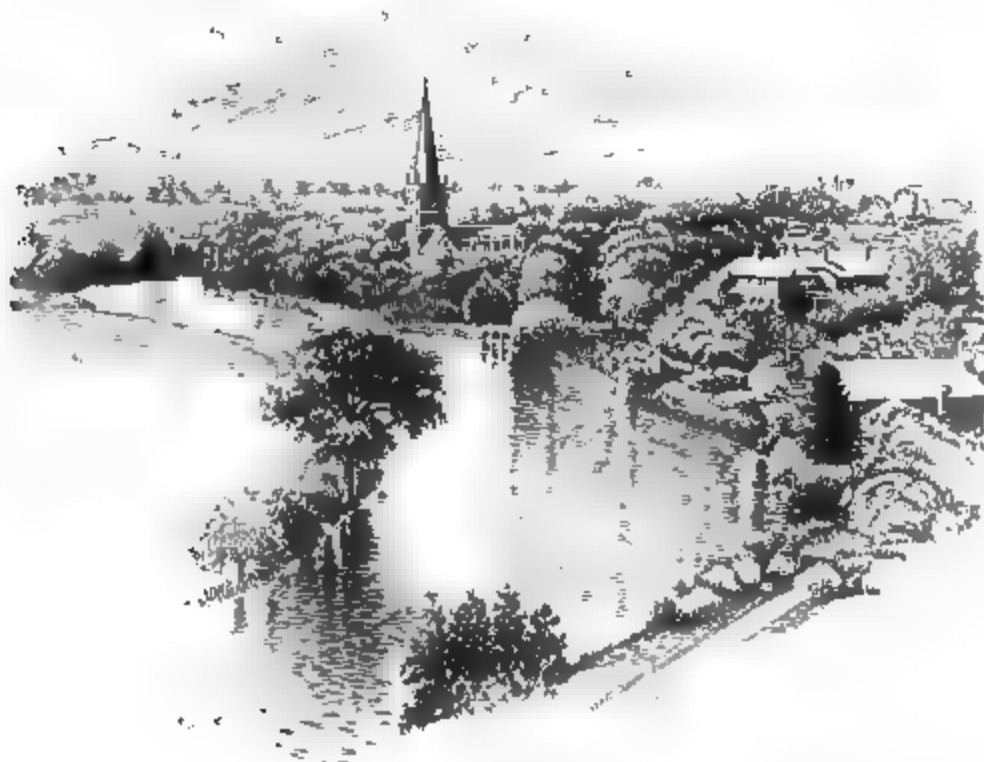
**The Romances.** — From this period of stress and storm and doubt, tempered by the gentle light of charity and mercy, Shakespeare, toward the close of his life, passed to a calmer and serener station "on the heights." His tragic period was closed, and he turned to write some of the loveliest of his comedies with undiminished freshness and creative vigor. These latest plays are sometimes called *romances*, because though they end happily and are therefore in one sense comedies, they are more grave and tender, and of a more tranquil beauty, than are the earlier comedies. They are the result of a deeper experience of life. The imagination which at the beginning of Shakespeare's work budded forth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the fairyland of Oberon and Titania, gives being in *The Tempest* to the dainty spirit Ariel, speeding at the command of Prospero, or cradled in the bell of a cowslip; while in *The Winter's Tale* we can fancy ourselves back again in Warwickshire with Shakespeare, breathing its country odors and gazing on the

"daffodils,  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty."

**Last Years.** — As Shakespeare's fortune and engagements permitted him, he seems to have spent more and more time in his native place. In his active and hard-working years in London, he had grown in fortune as well as in reputation; he had shown himself a practical and capable man of business as well as a transcendent genius, and by his character he had won the love and respect of his fellows. By 1597 he was able to buy a home for himself in his beloved Stratford. In 1599 he was one of the proprietors of "The Globe Theatre."

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In 1609, a further purchase of one hundred and seven acres of land at Stratford is made by William Shakespeare, Gentleman. And in 1610 or 1612 he appears to have returned there permanently. He had said his last to the world; for a few silent years he lived in the midst of the scenes and associations of his boyhood, and then, on the twenty-third of April, 1616, the fifty-



Holy Trinity Church and River, Stratford

second anniversary, it is supposed, of his birth, he closed his eyes on the world.

**Summary.** — Shakespeare's great distinction as a man of letters is that in him are combined, to a greater extent than in any other modern writer, a profound knowledge of the human heart, an exalted imagination, and an unequaled command of language. Perhaps the noblest single characteristic of Shakespeare is his union of righteousness and charity. Great in his dramatic and

poetic art, he is yet greater as one who saw life broadly and in the main truly. He knew the dark passions of man and the hidden sources of crime in men's hearts, but he knew also goodness and beauty, and showed a wise tolerance of human weakness. These things we find in his dramas. But his plays, we believe, are but the partial expression of a wise, rich, and kindly nature. We feel sure that Shakespeare was not only a great genius, but a great man, and when Ben Jonson, moved to unwonted tenderness, declares: "I loved the man, and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any," we know that his tribute is just.

#### ELIZABETHAN PROSE

The greatest names in Elizabethan literature are those of the dramatists and the poets, yet the intellectual advance of the time showed itself also in a rapid development of prose. Many pamphlets were written on the questions of the day, books of history and travel, and countless short stories from the rapid pens of such writers as Peele and Greene. But among the prose writers of the time three stand out prominently: SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554–1586), RICHARD HOOKER (1553–1600), and FRANCIS, LORD BACON (1561–1626).

**Sir Philip Sidney.** — In an age of many great men Sidney is one of the most romantic as well as most noble figures. The story of his life — of his education at Oxford, of his travels abroad, where he formed friendships with statesmen, artists, and scholars, of his service as ambassador of Queen Elizabeth at the age of twenty-two, of his passionate love for "Stella," recorded in his sonnets *Astrophel and Stella*, of his devotion to the new learning, of his friendship with Spenser, and finally of his early and heroic death at the battle of Zutphen —

is one which, to use words of his own, "holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney-corner." He was the last of the courtly knights of old England, and was taken by Spenser as a pattern of knighthood in the *Faërie Queen*.

Sidney's two important works are *The Defense of Poesie* (about 1581), and the *Arcadia* (1590). The latter is an elaborate romance which has furnished many stories and incidents to later writers, while the former is a review of the beauties and virtues of poetry written in answer to the attacks of the Puritans. It is one of the earliest of English essays, and the best critical essay of Elizabeth's reign. In it we find an exquisite breadth of mind, a fine enthusiasm for poetry, and a style that shows a poet's sense of the music and fitness of words.

**Richard Hooker** (1553-1600), in his life and work, presents a marked contrast to Sidney. He was a man of humble origin and of a gentle, religious nature, who spent most of his life in quiet study, far from the gay and busy court of Elizabeth. Although he might have gained a great place in the church, he preferred a quiet country parish, where he could "see God's blessings spring out of the earth and be far from noise." No worldly ambitions broke the quiet of his simple scholar's life. He was one of the few churchmen of his day who avoided the painful wrangles and controversies on matters of church doctrine in which the different sects were involved. He wrote at one time, "God and Nature did not intend me for contentions, but for study and quietness."

Hooker's great work is the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594), a book which seeks to explain and defend the laws of the Church, and which rises above mere controversy. It shows the broad vision and calm, dis-

passionate judgment of the philosopher. Hooker aimed to show that God's law is not evidenced in the Bible alone, but in the entire scheme of things, — that is, in the universe. The largeness and sublimity of Hooker's conception place him with the great spirits of his time.

**Francis Bacon** (1561–1626) is one who commands our respect as a man of wonderful mental powers rather than our love as a noble or generous character. His biographer speaks of him as “the brightest, richest, largest mind but one, in the age which had seen Shakespeare and his fellows.”

**Life.** — Bacon was born in London, January 22, 1561. His father was Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and one of the most trusted of the early statesmen of Elizabeth; a yet more famous statesman, Lord Burleigh, was his uncle by marriage. From his earliest years, Bacon was thus connected with the court and with public life. At eighteen he was left, by the death of his father, to make his own way in the world. He accordingly entered upon the study of the law, and his advance was exceedingly rapid. He was made a barrister in 1582, Solicitor-General in 1607, Attorney-General in 1613, and Lord Chancellor in 1617. From this brilliant public success we get no idea of Bacon's inner life and deepest aspirations. In fact Bacon's character was one of contradictions. On the one hand was the scholar and philosopher, who had “taken all knowledge” for his “province,” with the noble purpose of benefiting humanity by the discovery of truth. On the other was the worldly, ambitious man, the lover of great place and power. He was not one who in the service of truth could endure poverty or obscurity; and from this springs the tragedy of his life. Bacon's worldly ambitions were overthrown



at a stroke. He was accused of having taken bribes in his office of Lord Chancellor. He piteously confessed the charge, and was henceforth a ruined man in reputation and fortune. Bacon spent the remainder of his life in the compilation of some of the great philosophical and scientific works on which his fame chiefly rests.

**Works.** — The most important of these are *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and the *Novum Organum* (1620). In these, the former of which, by reason of its eloquent style, is to be ranked as pure literature, Bacon shows that the old modes of speculative thought used by the philosophers of ancient and medieval times had produced but little accurate or scientific knowledge, and he concludes that it is necessary to adopt a new method of study if we wish to arrive at truth. This new method is set forth in the *Novum Organum*, or New Instrument of learning, and has become the great principle of modern scientific research. If we wish to know the facts of Nature, Bacon says, we must study them in detail, by long, patient observation and experiment. Then from these details it may be possible to arrive at general truths or universal laws. It is from Bacon's comprehensive outline of the new idea that modern science largely takes its inspiration and beginning. Bacon himself made little progress in scientific investigation, but he was the forerunner of Harvey and Newton, and of the entire world of great men who have developed our present-day sciences.

**Essays.** — But the student of literature is more directly concerned with Bacon's *Essays*, published in three editions between 1597 and 1625.

By an "essay," Bacon meant the first trial, or weighing, of a subject, as distinguished from a finished treatise. His *Essays* are pithy jottings on great subjects, informally

set down, with no attempt to carry the thought to its full or logical conclusion. They read like the notebook of a profound thinker, a shrewd observer of life, a politic and active man of affairs. They are brief, suggestive, without ornament, but closely packed with thought. They give us the concentrated results of Bacon's experience, and are often comparable to the proverbial sayings in which wise men have delighted since the days of Solomon. Often they go to the heart of the matter with one quick thrust, as in "Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark;" "I cannot call riches better than the baggage of virtue;" and "A man's nature runs either to herbs or weeds, therefore let him seasonably water the one and destroy the other."

Bacon's own account of the object of the *Essays* is that he "endeavoured to make them not vulgar (*i.e.* popular), but of a nature whereof much should be found in experience and little in books; so that they should be neither repetitions nor fancies;" and he desires that they should "come home to men's business and bosoms."

#### SUMMARY OF RENAISSANCE LITERATURE IN ENGLAND

We have seen England, lifted by a common wave of thought and emotion, advance under the influence of the new learning, and find an outlet for her richer and deeper experience in the creation of innumerable works in every department of literature. We have approached this many-sided and inexhaustible period chiefly through the study of three of its greatest men, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Bacon. The first is supreme as a poet of dreamland, the second supreme among all poets, the last is the great thinker who stands at the gateway of our modern science. These men are indeed preëminent,

but other writers crowd about them, each great enough to stand first in a less abundant time. The extent and richness of Elizabethan literature has made our study most limited, for so "spacious" is the time that on every hand are beautiful regions which we cannot even pretend to explore. For instance, there is all the literature of criticism, of which we have mentioned only Sidney's *Defense of Poesie*; there is the literature of travel, books such as Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1589), in which the narratives of great navigators like Sir Humphrey Gilbert or Sir Walter Raleigh were collected; there are books of short poems, which tell us how prodigal the country was in song in that full time when England was "a nest of singing birds." Then, too, there are series of sonnets, such as those of Spenser, Sidney, William Drummond (1585-1649); the last perhaps the most Italian in tone and among the most beautiful of them all. We have spoken briefly of the drama, but only extended study can make us realize its power and richness, the great host of busy playwrights and their extraordinary vigor and productiveness. We have alluded to the prose-writers, but we must pass by the work of historian, theologian, romance-writer, and antiquarian, almost without mention. We are forced to leave these regions behind us unexplored, but it will help us to a firmer hold on this period of the new learning if, before leaving it, we fix in our minds certain points of chronology that rise like milestones along the way. In doing this we must remember that such arbitrary divisions of literature are convenient, but not always exactly true, for literary periods are not in reality thus sharply defined.

*First* (about 1491 to about 1509). We may associate the last ten years of the fifteenth and the first nine or ten of the sixteenth centuries with that band of teachers and

educational reformers who may be called the missionaries of the new learning. This period reaches from about 1491, the year when Grocyn lectured on Greek at Oxford, to about 1509, the year of the accession of Henry VIII.

*Second* (1509–1557). During this time the influence of Italy begins to be apparent in English poetry. Henry VIII is a patron of learning. More publishes his *Utopia*, Heywood his *Interludes*. We note in *Ralph Roister Doister* the beginning of regular comedy. On the whole, the new learning is making itself apparent in literature, and the time is full of the signs of promise.

*Third* (1557–1579). This period may be remembered as beginning with the publication of Tottel's *Miscellany*, which marks the real beginning of Elizabethan literature, and ending with that of Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. During this interval the coming of a mighty outburst draws nearer, the work of preparation goes on in the publication of numerous classical translations; Sackville writes his *Induction to the Mirror for Magistrates* (1563); short poems and ballads appear in extraordinary numbers; the first regular tragedy is written, and innumerable Italian stories become popular. It is a time of growth, of preparation, and of expectancy.

*Fourth* (1579–1637). This period includes the high noon of the English Renaissance. It begins with the *Shepherd's Calendar*, which marks the decisive entrance into literature of the greatest poet England had produced since Chaucer. The ten years succeeding are marked by the rapid advance of the drama under Lyly, Peele, Greene, Lodge, and Marlowe, the immediate precursors of Shakespeare. In 1590, with the first instalment of the *Faërie Queene* and the advent of Shakespeare, we are at the opening of twenty of the most glorious years

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in the whole course of our literature. From about 1613, when Shakespeare ceased to write, we note the slow decline of this creative energy, and that shifting of the nation's interest to religious and political questions which is a late effect of the Reformation. In 1637 two events occur which emphasize for us the ending of the old order and the beginning of the new. In that year Ben Jonson died, the greatest surviving representative of the glory of the Elizabethans, and in that year also there was published the *Lycidas* of the young Puritan poet, John Milton.

· IMPORTANT DATES

ELIZABETH, <i>Queen of England</i>	1558-1603
EDMUND SPENSER	1552-1599
<i>The Shepherd's Calendar</i>	1579
<i>The Faërie Queene</i>	1590-1596
SIR WALTER RALEIGH	1552-1618
<i>The History of the World</i>	1614
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, poet, courtier, ambassador	1554-1586
<i>A Defense of Poesie</i>	about 1581
<i>The Arcadia</i>	published 1590
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE	1564-1593
<i>Tamburlaine</i>	printed 1590
Other early dramatists, KYD, PEELE, and GREENE.	
Execution of MARY STUART, Queen of Scots	1587
Defeat of the Spanish Armada	1588
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	1564-1616
Period of Shakespeare's literary activity	about 1588-1613
BEN JONSON	1573-1637
<i>Every Man in his Humour</i>	acted 1598
Other later dramatists, MIDDLETON, DEKKER, CHAPMAN, etc.	
FRANCIS BACON	1561-1626
His <i>Essays</i>	1597-1625
RICHARD HOOKER's <i>Ecclesiastical Polity</i>	1594-1618

FOREIGN DATE

MONTAIGNE'S <i>Essays</i>	1580-1588
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## CHAPTER IV

### THE DECLINE OF THE RENAISSANCE

#### THE ENGLAND OF MILTON

ALTHOUGH Shakespeare and Milton are familiarly linked together in our ordinary speech as the two greatest poets of England, in the whole spirit and nature of their work they have but little in common. It is not merely that they are, for the most part, distinguished in separate provinces of poetry; that Shakespeare is above all the dramatic, and Milton the epic poet of the literature;<sup>1</sup> the difference lies much deeper, and declares itself unmistakably at almost every point. Now, this is not entirely due to an inborn, personal difference in the genius of these two representative poets; it is due also to the difference in the spirit of the times they represent. For in a sense even Shakespeare was "of an age," as well as "for all time." In the true spirit of the Renaissance, Shakespeare's work is taken up chiefly with this world rather than with any world hereafter; he is interested in

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between dramatic and epic poetry is difficult to make clear in any short definition. In the drama, the author presents the characters of the play directly before the spectator, letting *them* by their own actions and words unfold the plot and disclose their several natures. In the epic, which is essentially a narrative poem, the author relates the story *himself*, generally a story of some heroic action or conflict, told in a dignified and elevated style. The drama is written for the stage, and is really not complete until it is produced there. The epic is to be read or recited.

life as life, and in men because of their essential humanity; his dramas are alive with the crowding interests and activities of Elizabeth's reign. But the England in which Milton lived and worked was stirred by far different emotions; its finest spirits were inspired by far different ideals. In the time of Milton and his compatriots, England's liberties, which had been fought for as far back as the days of King John and *Magna Charta*, were threatened with extinction. The Puritans strove to establish civil and religious liberty, the Royalists, or Cavaliers, to uphold the power of the King; and so England was torn by a strife which in Milton's day absorbed the best energies of the nation. Milton interprets and expresses this England of Puritanism, as Shakespeare does the England of Elizabeth; and to understand the difference in the spirit of their poetry, we must turn to history and grasp the broad distinction between the times they respectively represent.

We spoke of the Renaissance as the rebirth of the religious as well as of the intellectual life of Europe, and we saw that while in Italy the new life of the mind took form in what we call the Revival of Learning, in Germany the new life of the spirit had its outcome in that religious awakening we call the Reformation. The Revival of Learning and the Reformation entered into England almost at the same time; but it was at different times that they found full and typical expression in literature. The age of Elizabeth was inspired chiefly by the new learning, and its literature was filled with an intense and high-spirited love of England and England's glory. It reflected the brave new world and all its gaiety, its masques and revels, pageantry and music, its luxury of color. It had something of the fine ardor and spontaneity of youth, and something too of youth's

strong, clear life-blood. But in the period to which we now turn, this element of joyousness becomes less typical, and there appears in literature a new power, more stern and austere, — that of Puritanism. Let us see who the Puritans were, and what they stood for.

**The Puritans and Puritanism.** — We have seen that the Reformation in the sixteenth century was largely the result of a new and independent study of the Bible by men who were not contented with the interpretation of Scripture made by the Church, or with the practices followed by it in the name of Christianity. The aim of the reformers or Protestants had been to get back to what they considered a simpler and more real religion. In England, during the reign of Henry VIII, the king had thrown off his allegiance to the Pope and had made himself the head of the Church within his dominions. Although this step had been taken for political reasons, England's freedom from papal authority had afforded new opportunities for the growth of Protestant doctrines. This national or *established* church came to be known as the *Anglican Church* or the *Church of England*. But notwithstanding the changes thus made in England by the English Reformation, there were, even in Elizabeth's reign, some Protestants who wished to depart still further from the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church. They were called *Puritans* because they aimed to purify their own lives, and to free the Church of what they thought were Popish practices.

Many of the Puritans were eccentric people, but although they were ridiculed for peculiarities of manner and dress — for their solemn and often sour visages, their steeple hats and closely cropped hair, and for such strange practices as embroidering Scripture texts on their shirts or petticoats — they were in many



respects the most solid people of the nation. Life was a serious business with them, a preparation for an existence hereafter. Their religion they placed above all else. God was their immediate lord and master, and they felt that allegiance to Him, to truth and the right, was above loyalty to the King. They believed they were responsible directly to God, and therefore they opposed the government of the Church of England and the authority of the bishops. Just as they had learned to interpret the Bible for themselves, and to criticize the teachings of the Church, so afterward, with the same independence, they learned to study political questions for themselves and to discuss the whole theory of government in church and state.

There was thus a close connection between the cause of religious liberty and that of political liberty; and in the first half of the seventeenth century, during the reigns of James I and Charles I, these two causes became one under the name of Puritanism. The Puritans had been active and, among certain classes, even numerous, during Elizabeth's time; we have seen how they opposed the production of plays in the city of London. But in James I's reign they grew even more influential, and in that of Charles I finally became the most powerful party in the realm. The Stuart kings failed to understand the people; they were arbitrary and obstinate, and flaunted before the people's rising sense of personal dignity and independence their theory of the "Divine Right" of kings. They believed that they were appointed of God to rule over England, and implied that they could do no wrong. But in the eyes of the Puritans the King did many wrongs; he favored the Established Church, with its bishops and its more formal service; he tolerated vice and drunkenness at court, and he trampled upon

their ancient liberties by collecting unjust taxes without their consent. These things were contrary to what the Puritans believed to be the will of God, and when, at the end of the Civil War, Charles I was condemned and beheaded, the Puritans felt that they were but instruments in the hands of God, executing His stern judgment.

There were thus in the England of this time two distinct parties — the Puritans and the Royalists — who were opposed to each other in politics, in religion, and in their private way of life. The former in their extreme moral severity condemned plays and masques, all dancing, archery, and playing at bowls on Sunday, — games which the young people of England had practised time out of mind on the village green. The Royalists or Cavaliers stood for greater freedom of life; in politics they were stanch supporters of the King and of a strong monarchy, and in religion they favored the more tolerant Established Church of England. They wore their hair long, over the shoulders, and were, in mind as in appearance, more elegant and graceful than the Puritan “Roundheads.” With most men of Elizabeth’s time, they believed that the world was a very good place, not to be condemned but enjoyed, and that pleasure was a worthy end in itself.

**The New Version of the Bible.** — One of the greatest results of the religious conflicts of the time was the publication of the King James version of the Bible. Both parties felt the need of an accurate translation of the Scriptures. In 1604, therefore, a commission of forty-seven churchmen and Puritan ministers was appointed, which, under the supervision of the King, made a careful revision and comparison of the earlier English translations. The work was completed in 1611, and has ever since been an incalculable spiritual force in

thousands of English households, and a great influence in the development of literature. Some of our greatest poets and prose writers have studied closely its thought, and striven to emulate its strength and simplicity of style. The King James version of the New Testament was based largely upon Tyndale's translation (1525). "If God spare my life," Tyndale had said to a learned opponent, "ere many years I will cause that a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." The Bible became the literature of the people, telling to the poorest and plainest the essential things of life in words that all could understand. If we find a typical picture in the press of London shopkeepers and 'prentices crowding the pit of the "Fortune" or the "Globe" theater, we find one no less typical in the eager throngs gathered about the reader of the Bible in the nave of St. Paul's cathedral.

**The Complexity of the Age.** — We must realize in studying this confused and many-sided period that though politically England was divided into two parties, there were many shades of opinion and much diversity of temperament among the members of each party. We must not think of all Cavaliers as gay and immoral; there were high-minded Royalists, who, though differing with the Puritans on questions of politics and of church government and church doctrine, held to a rule of life that was almost Puritanical in its strictness. Many Churchmen, standing for the king and a strong church organization in the hands of the bishops, led the most pious and genuinely spiritual lives. Nor must we imagine that all Puritans were hard, intolerant, joyless disciplinarians. John Milton, for example, in some respects the greatest of Puritans, was one who loved music and color, and who delighted in the exquisitely

sensuous poetry of Spenser. In short, as we might expect, all the right was not on one side, and honorable and patriotic men were to be found in both parties.

The literature of the early sixteenth century reflects the different moods and tendencies of the age. We have on the one hand the work of the later dramatists and lyric poets, carrying over from the time of Elizabeth something of the ardent enthusiasm and large enjoyment of life which was the most marked feature of the Renaissance; and on the other a religious literature, which finds its highest expression in the great epic poems of Milton, and in the strong, simple, biblical prose of John Bunyan.

## LATER ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

### THE DRAMA

'To form any just conception of the commanding genius of Shakespeare, we must measure his altitude by that of his contemporaries. We must imagine him, also, in his daily human relations with men of his own class and calling; we must think of him as an actor among actors, as a theatrical manager, as one of that immortal group at the Mermaid Tavern which included Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, and John Fletcher. Some knowledge of Shakespeare's contemporaries or immediate successors in the drama is absolutely necessary if we would see either Shakespeare or his time in proper perspective; but the number of these dramatists is so great, their total production so enormous, that we can consider here only two or three of the most important.

**Ben Jonson.** — The most commanding figure of this group is BEN JONSON (1573–1637), a big-framed, dominant, aggressive man, who by his own native ability and

sheer strength of personality came to be the literary dictator of his age. He was a poet, scholar, dramatist, satirist, and critic, and in all these capacities greatly influenced his own and subsequent times. A contemporary poet said of him, "He was better versed, and knew more in Greek and Latin, than all the poets in England."

The foundation of this knowledge was laid by the great scholar Camden, who early befriended Jonson, and of whom the poet always spoke with sincere gratitude. Jonson was, it seems, too poor to go to college, and so was put to the craft of brick-laying. But his independent and ambitious nature early asserted itself, and he went off to the Low Countries to the wars. Not long after, Jonson returned to London, and there grew familiar with the varied life of the streets in all its realistic detail. As he was ambitious of literary fame, he connected himself with the theaters, much, no doubt, as Shakespeare had done before. In 1598 he produced his first play, *Every Man in His Humour*, in which Shakespeare himself probably acted. It was successful at once, and Jonson rapidly advanced in reputation. He wrote other comedies and several tragedies, which by their cleverness, wit, scholarship, and vigor of mind, won for him a distinguished position. He also wrote many masques for the entertainment of the court, or in celebration of great marriages in the families of the nobles. King James made him Poet Laureate, and it is said offered him knighthood, which he declined. He was always in favor with both King James and King Charles. It seems that notwithstanding his bulky, ungainly figure, and his blunt and sometimes coarse speech, Jonson had a certain courtliness of manner which, together with his wit and learning, won him friends among men and women of the highest

rank. Although he quarreled with many men, he was a welcome companion in the famous company of wits that gathered at the Mermaid Tavern, where he is said to have engaged in many "wit-combats" with his friend Shakespeare. After Shakespeare's death, Jonson was the most prominent man of letters in England. He was surrounded by a group of admiring disciples, called the "sons of Ben," who were the means of continuing his literary opinions and ideals to later times.

**Jonson and Shakespeare.** — The differences between Jonson and Shakespeare are numerous and fundamental. Jonson's work as a whole is barer, more prosaic, more learned, and more labored than Shakespeare's. Shakespeare, while remaining true to life, yet contrives to invest his mimic world with a magical atmosphere of beauty and romance. But Jonson is a realist. He was impatient with the attempts to imitate storms and battles on the stage, and he objected to changing the scene in a play from one country to another, from England to France, for example, as Shakespeare had done in *Henry V*. His purpose was not to picture romantic and distant scenes, but rather to present

"— deeds, and language, such as men do use."

In *Every Man in His Humour*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and other plays he satirized the *humours*, or eccentricities, of London characters; he showed playwright and audience what a wealth of dramatic interest lay in the everyday life of street and tavern. In his Roman tragedies of *Sejanus* and *Catiline* he used his great knowledge of the ancients to paint with scrupulous care scenes that should be historically correct in every detail. But though these plays are massive, scholarly, and painstaking, they lack the warmth and humanity which distinguished

Shakespeare's treatment of classical themes, and one is apt to read them with respect and profit rather than with delight. Jonson's plays lose much by sacrificing poetry to satire and scholarship, and yet they are excellent in their ingenuity of plot (especially *The Alchemist*), in their wealth of literal detail, their wit and versatility. Jonson aims to teach a moral, to reform society, and he is not above using the drama as a means of flaying his enemies. Further, he never throws himself completely into his characters; he does not see them from all sides, but takes one trait, and, magnifying it, makes that the man. His men and women are too often caricatures rather than characters.

But there was another side to Jonson's rugged nature. Ponderous as he often seems, he could write the lightest and most charming of lyrics. Songs such as the "Hymn to Diana," "Drink to Me only with Thine Eyes," or "See the Chariot at hand here of Love," are among the treasures of English poetry, while his charming pastoral drama, *The Sad Shepherd* (1637), is filled with an unexpected tenderness and beauty.

**Beaumont and Fletcher.** — FRANCIS BEAUMONT (1586–1616) and JOHN FLETCHER (1579–1625), "the great twin brethren of the stage," follow Shakespeare and not Jonson in the type of their art. The plays which pass under their joint names are full of romance, beauty, and passion; there are melodies in them — as in the lyrical passages in *The Faithful Shepherdess* — which invite comparison with Shakespeare. But beautiful as these plays are, they lack the wholesomeness, the masculine vigor, the depth of thought, the firm grasp of human character, which delight us in Shakespeare. They were written more to satisfy the taste of the court than of all classes of Englishmen, and therefore are less

broad in appeal. They are softer, more relaxing, and we feel that in them the sharp distinctions between right and wrong are blurred or obscured. So the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, like that of Ben Jonson, shows in its own fashion that the decadence of the drama has begun.

**Decline of the Drama.** — For some years before Jonson's death, the Elizabethan drama had shown symptoms of decline, and when he died in 1637 the force and productiveness of this extraordinary dramatic period were nearing their end. Plays were indeed written after that time in which something of the old glory survived, but these are but the echoes of a greater age. At last in JAMES SHIRLEY (1596–1666), the great part of whose work was done between 1625–1655, these last echoes of the Elizabethan drama died away, and the splendid creative energy that had sustained itself so long was almost entirely exhausted.

**Puritan Hostility to the Stage.** — But we must remember that in addition to any decline in its original power, to any failure that came from within, the drama was forced to contend with the bitter attacks of the Puritans from without. In the early seventeenth century this hostility to the stage increased; unsuccessful attempts were made (1619–1631–1633) to suppress the Blackfriars Theater, and the representation of plays on Sunday was prohibited. Many of the more respectable people stayed away from the theaters altogether, while those who came demanded plays of a more and more depraved character. Finally, about the beginning of the Civil War (1642), the theaters were closed altogether, and the drama almost ceased, until the Restoration of the Stuart Kings in 1660.

**General Survey.** — Looked at as a whole, the Elizabethan drama, even apart from Shakespeare, in its



magnitude, its intensity, its beauty, its variety, its snatches of exquisite song, is one of the most astonishing achievements of the English genius in literature. In attempting to form any general estimate of it, we must remember that these dramas were, as a rule, not carefully elaborated literary productions, but acting plays, hastily put together for immediate use. Play-writing was an art, but it was a business also. The demand for plays was great, the price (especially before 1600) was comparatively trifling. Under these circumstances, the dramatists naturally saved time and invention by appropriating such material as could serve their turn. They ransacked the literatures of Italy, Spain, or France; they borrowed from foreign novels or dramas; they worked singly, or in partnership like Beaumont and Fletcher; they translated, they made new plays, they adapted or furbished up old ones. We can form no definite idea of the number of these plays; many of them are doubtless irretrievably lost. Only twenty-three of Thomas Heywood's plays have been preserved, yet he declared in 1633, before his adventurous career was over, that he had had "an entire hand, or at least a main finger," in the composition of no less than two hundred and twenty plays. Work produced under such conditions is naturally of very unequal merit, yet even in the poorer plays we are likely to stumble upon a passage that shows us that the lesser men could catch for a moment the accent of the masters. De Quincey, speaking of the Elizabethan drama, has said, "No literature, not excepting even that of Athens, has ever presented such a multiform theater, such a carnival display, mask and antimask, of impassioned life — breathing, moving, acting, suffering, laughing."

## NON-DRAMATIC POETRY OF THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

From the Death of Spenser, 1599, to the Restoration, 1660

The non-dramatic poetry of the early half of the seventeenth century, like the dramatic, is largely a continuation of that of the greater Elizabethans. As we have just seen, many of the rising generation of writers were united by a personal loyalty to Ben Jonson, and by a reverence for his critical opinions. Other poets took Spenser for their model, drawing inspiration from his pastoral rather than from his chivalric poetry, and following him chiefly in his more serious moods. Still others wrote under the influence of John Donne, another Elizabethan of wayward but powerful genius, of whom we have not yet spoken. Among these rising writers were a number of religious poets who through the medium of verse gave utterance to different moods and degrees of devotional piety. Some, like the saintly George Herbert, expressed in poetry much that was best in the Church of England; others, like Milton, stirred by different ideals, represented the militant and reforming spirit of Puritanism. But great as this difference may seem between the Anglican and the Puritan, it is insignificant to that which separates the *Cavalier poets* — gay, elegant triflers of the Court — from those poets who, apart in some respects, are at least united by a devotion to high ideals and by a lofty spirituality of nature. The variety of these schools, or groups, into which the poets of this time may be divided, the irreconcilable differences in feeling, and in the general attitude towards life, are characteristic of the confusion of the time. This diversity, we must remember, is not wholly due to the inevitable differences in human character, it is also national,

for it is the literary expression of those conflicting beliefs and ideals which were fought out in the Civil War.

**The Spenserian School.** — While he had few followers among his contemporaries, Spenser has exercised a profound and almost continuous influence upon the English poetry of the succeeding time. His effect upon the poetry of the early seventeenth century was probably greater than that of any other Elizabethan, not excepting Shakespeare himself. Especially at this time a number of poets, of whom we may speak as the *Spenserian School*, were directly and specifically influenced by Spenser's poetic mood. They used the old forms of allegory and romance in which to treat new themes in science, religion, and philosophy. Retaining the familiar figures and associations of classical mythology, one poet explains the parts of the human body, another tells the story of the life of Christ. This strange combination naturally leads to great incongruity; but there is in these poems much genuine beauty. The authors have caught something of the master's fluent melody and ease of versification. Descriptions of Nature, of dawn and sunset, of field and stream, are woven in with the story of shepherds' and shepherdesses' loves; and we are often made to forget the scientific or religious theme in the background of romantic adventure, and the charm of an Arcadian atmosphere of quiet and beauty.

**John Donne.** — While these poets thus followed "Divinest Spenser," others were led in a very different direction through the example of the great but eccentric poet, JOHN DONNE (1573–1631). Donne was a man of intense and "highly passionate" nature. In his youth he showed that delight in action, travel, and adventure characteristic of so many of the great Elizabethans.

He was a hard student. Yet he found time to join the group at the Mermaid Tavern, to frequent the best society, and gather round him a host of friends. In 1617 the death of his wife seemed to work a great change in him; he turned from worldly interests and pursuits and concentrated his thought on things spiritual. He had entered the Church in 1615. In 1621 he was made Dean of St. Paul's, and became one of the greatest preachers England had ever known. His poetry was almost all written before the death of his wife; after that event he expressed himself chiefly through his sermons.

Donne is one of the great figures in Elizabethan literature. Both in subject-matter and in form his poetry is distinguished from that of his contemporaries. Rejecting the stock figures and poetic apparatus — gods and goddesses, nymphs and shepherds — which the Elizabethan writers had gleaned from their study of the classics, Donne drew his comparisons from the lore of science, law, and metaphysics, in which he was deeply versed. He differed too from most Elizabethans in his rather careless versification and in his frequent obscurity of thought. Ben Jonson once said that "Donne, for not keeping accent, deserved hanging," and that "for not being understood he would perish." But Jonson also spoke of him as "the first poet in the world in some things;" and we feel that the praise was not undue. Donne's poetry is difficult and abstruse, but it is the poetry of a great mind. His obscurity is largely due to his use of far-fetched figures of speech, called *conceits*. Many writers of the time were going out of their way in the search for these ingenious comparisons and wire-drawn subtleties of thought. But with Donne such over-refinements, in many instances, seem natural rather than affected, and more profound than fantastic.

Donne's mental grasp and his command of language are shown in his grim realism, and in the packed thought of his verses, which is expressed oftentimes in the tersest words. An example is found in the description of a storm at sea in his poem *The Storm*:

"Lightning was all our light, and it rain'd more  
Than if the sun had drunk the sea before.  
Some coffin'd in their cabins lie, equally  
Grieved that they are not dead, and yet must die;  
And as sin-burden'd souls from grave will creep  
At the last day, some forth their cabins peep,  
And trembling ask, 'What news?' . . .

. . . . .  
"Some sitting on the hatches would seem there  
With hideous gazing to fear away fear.  
Then note they the ship's sicknesses, the mast  
Shaked with an ague, and the hold and waist  
With a salt dropsy clogg'd, and all our tacklings  
Snapping, like too-too-high-stretch'd treble strings  
And from our tatter'd sails rags drop down so,  
As from one hang'd in chains a year ago."

**Herbert and Vaughan.** — Donne's example in the use of conceits and in the writing of devotional poems was followed by a number of poets who succeeded him, and whom we may call the *Religious Poets*. Some of these writers carried the use of conceits to the point of extravagance. Others, however, wrote more simply, especially GEORGE HERBERT (1593–1633) and HENRY VAUGHAN (1621–1695), whose poetry is full of sincere religious feeling. Indeed, so tranquil is it, so lifted into the serene air of holy meditations, that it seems a place of sanctity in the midst of a turbulent age. The circumstances in which these two poets wrote were in keeping with the remote and unworldly atmosphere of their work, for Herbert was a country parson, and Vaughan a village

doctor in Wales. Herbert, sprung from the younger branch of a distinguished family, was a courtier in his youth, and thought of devoting himself to a public career. His birth and spirit, he tells us, entangled him in a world of strife, and inclined him towards —

“the way that takes the town.”

But after some hesitation, he resolved to take orders. In 1630 he became vicar of Bemerton, a village about a mile from Salisbury. Here he wrote his poems, and here he died three years later.

Herbert's poetry has nothing of the inspired majesty of Milton's verse, but it pleases by its even tone of joyous contentment in the round of daily service and worship. Occasionally, as in the verses entitled *The Collar*, he strikes a note of passion which tells of the spiritual conflict through which he passed. In his most famous book of poems, *The Temple* (1633), the reader is invited to enter *The Porch* of the holy edifice, and in *The Church* to realize with the author the full joy of a religious life. To paraphrase the words of his biographer, Isaac Walton, Herbert was lowly in his own eyes and lovely in the eyes of others, and both the beauty of his nature and the religious seclusion of his surroundings shine through his poems. “It is his quiet religion, his quaint, contemplative, vicarage-garden note of thought and scholarship, which pleases most, and will always please, the calm piety of England.”

**Vaughan.** — Vaughan, Herbert's disciple in sacred poetry, fell below his master in art, but surpassed him in depth and originality. Living out his secluded life in the quiet valley of the Usk, Vaughan saw God revealed not only in the services of the Church, but also in the living world of Nature, in the holy innocence of child-

hood, and in the "immortal longings" of his own spirit. He gazes on a gilded cloud or a flower, and finds in them some "shadows of divinity;" searching himself, he comes upon strange hints of man's Divine origin, he discovers "some rills" from the Eternal source of being,

"With echoes beaten from the eternal hills."

To Vaughan, man's life on earth is a brief exile from that eternal existence from which he came, and to which, when he rises above his temporal limitations, he longs to return. The light of man's spirit is a spark of the Divine light:

"For each enclosed spirit is a star  
Enlight'ning his own little sphere;  
Whose light, though fetch'd and borrow'd from far  
Both mornings makes and evenings there."

**The Cavalier Lyrists: Robert Herrick.** — Meanwhile at Court a group of aristocratic poets composed their slight but often charming love-songs to Celia or Lucasta. Their thoughts are given to the pleasures of this world as frankly as those of Vaughan and Herbert are centered on the next. ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1674), a Devonshire vicar, while he shares in the mood of these light and graceful amorists, rises above them in vigor and charm, and in the fine quality of his lyrical gift. In his youth Herrick was one of those genial spirits gathered round Ben Jonson. In 1647, deprived of his living by the Puritans, he left Devonshire and returned to London. There in 1648 he published his *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers*.

Herrick's limpid and altogether charming verse is troubled by no depth of thought or storm of passion.

The greater part of it reflects the pagan spirit of those who lie at ease in the warm sunshine; content to enjoy, they sigh that life is but a day, and lament as the lengthening shadow draws near. The closing verse of his poem, *Corinna's going a-Maying*, is a good example of his familiar mood; the inevitable chill of regret creeps into the sunshiny lyric of May-day, and his laughter ends in a sigh:

“Come, let us go while we are in our prime,  
And take the harmless folly of the time!  
We shall grow old apace, and die  
Before we know our liberty.  
Our life is short; and our days run  
As fast away as does the sun;  
And as a vapor, or a drop of rain  
Once lost, can ne'er be found again:  
So when or you or I are made  
A fable, song, or fleeting shade;  
All love, all liking, all delight  
Lies drowned with us in endless night.  
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,  
Come, my Corinna! Come, let's go a-Maying.”

There is a captivating naturalness and freshness in Herrick's note; the rural England of his time is green forever in his verse, the hedgerows are abloom, the Maypoles gay with garlands. He sings

“Of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,  
Of April, May, of June, and July-flowers.”

England was racked with civil war, but neither the strife of religions nor the tumults in the state are able to shatter his Arcadia; while King and Parliament are in deadly grapple, Herrick sings his dainty love-songs



to Julia and Anthea, and babbles "of green fields." Enjoy your May-day, gather rose-buds, "let's now take our time;" such were the gay songs he flung defiantly in the face of sober, Puritan England.

**Herrick and Milton.** — In the midst of this poetry of self-indulgence there rose the mighty voice of Milton. In *Lycidas*, which may be said to conclude the poems of his earlier period, Milton, too, asks the pagan question, "Seeing that life is short, is it not better to enjoy?" but only to meet it with triumphant denial. This famous passage becomes of especial interest when we think that it was probably written with such poets as Herrick in mind; when we recognize in it the high seriousness and religious faith of Puritanism, squarely confronting the nation's lighter mood:

"Alas! what boots it with uncessant care  
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done, as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorrèd shears,  
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'  
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:  
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

## JOHN MILTON

(1608–1674)

“ . . . He died,  
 Who was the sire of an immortal strain,  
 Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride  
 The priest, the slave, and the liberticide  
 Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite  
 Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,  
 Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite  
 Yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the sons of light.”

—SHELLEY.

“His sympathies with things are much narrower than Shakespeare's. Shakespeare was not polemical: Milton was polemical altogether.”

—CARLYLE.

“An appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship.”

—MARK PATTISON.

“God-gifted organ voice of England.”

—TENNYSON.

Milton is much more than the poet of Puritanism. His beauty-loving nature, his varied accomplishments, the course of his literary development, and his profound learning, make him the representative of a period rather than of a single sect or political party. We think of him as the author of *Paradise Lost*, and as the learned and eloquent defender of the Puritan cause, but we must remember that the highly serious and consecrated poet who wrote his great theological epic to “justify the ways of God to men” was in his early years a poetical disciple of Spenser, showing much of the master's sensuous delight in beauty. In Milton the Renaissance and the Reformation meet. The transition from the romantic, beauty-loving Milton, author of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, to the polemical and theological Milton, who wrote *Eikonoclastes* and *Paradise Lost*, is a single, concrete illustration of the change through which England

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herself passed in the first half of the seventeenth century. Born in 1608, not ten years after the death of Spenser, when Shakespeare was still in London writing for the stage, Milton had a direct heritage from the great Elizabethans. Indeed, his work throughout has much



John Milton

of that large utterance and breadth of conception, if not breadth of sympathy, which characterized the men of the preceding generation. But Milton grew up in a time noted for its erudition, and came to maturity in an England torn by the grim struggles of a civil war. His work reflects these influences also. Passing from the period of youthful dreams and poetic fancies, he

plunges into the midst of the conflict, devoting twenty years of his life to his country and the cause of liberty; and then in his last years, with the wreckage of lost causes and shattered hopes about him, writes his great narrative poems, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, and the poetic drama, *Samson Agonistes*. In these poems we have the result of years of study, of profound thought and memorable experience; the poet's voice deepens, and English poetry is given a new note.

**Boyhood in London.** — Milton was born in Bread Street, in the heart of London, probably not far from the famous Mermaid Tavern, on December 9, 1608. His early years were passed in a sober and orderly Puritan household among influences of refinement and culture. His father, John Milton, was a scrivener, an occupation somewhat corresponding to the modern conveyancer, but he was also well known as a musical composer. The younger Milton's faculty for music had thus an opportunity for early development; a fact of especial interest when we recall the distinctively musical character of his verse.

Milton was early destined "for the study of humane letters," and given every educational advantage. He had private instruction, and about 1620 was sent to the famous Grammar School of St. Paul. Here, to use his own expression, he worked "with eagerness," laying the foundation for his future blindness by intense application. He tells us that after his twelfth year he seldom left his books until midnight. At this time he began to experiment in poetry, and wrote paraphrases of two of the Psalms.

**Cambridge (1624-1632).** — In 1624 Milton entered Christ's College, Cambridge, where he continued to work with the same steady and regulated enthusiasm.

While there he seems to have become convinced that he was appointed to perform some great poetic task, and to have ordered his life accordingly. He believed that he who would "write well hereafter on laudable things ought himself to be a true poem." His youth was spotless and high-minded, with perhaps a touch of that austerity which deepened as he grew older. His face had an exquisitely refined and thoughtful beauty; his soft, light-brown hair fell to his shoulders after the Cavalier fashion; his figure was well knit but slender; his complexion, "exceeding fair." From his somewhat delicate beauty, and from his blameless life, he gained the college nickname of "the Lady." At this period he wrote the *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, in which there is now and then a suggestion of that noble music which was to be Milton's chief contribution to English poetry; and the famous sonnet, *On the Completion of his Twenty-Third Year*.

**Horton (1632-1638).** — After leaving Cambridge, Milton spent nearly six years at his father's country house at Horton, a village near the royal castle of Windsor, and about seventeen miles from London. Here he lived with books and Nature, studying the classics and physical science, and leaving his studious quiet only for an occasional trip to town to learn something new in music or in mathematics.

**L'Allegro and Il Penseroso.** — Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, composed at this time, reflect both the young poet and his surroundings. Rustic life and superstitions are there blended with idyllic pictures of the Horton landscape. In *L'Allegro* we hear the plowman whistle at his furrow, the milkmaid sing at her work; we see the

"Meadows trim, with daisies pied,  
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide,"

or mark the neighboring towers of Windsor

“Bosomed high in tufted trees.”

In both poems we detect Milton himself, a refined and serious nature, exquisitely responsive to whatever is best in life, with a quick and by no means narrow appreciation of things beautiful. The poems suggest to us a youthful Milton dreaming of gorgeous and visionary splendors in the long summer twilights, delighting in the plays of Jonson and Shakespeare, and spending lonely midnights in the loftiest speculations of philosophy. In these poems, especially *L'Allegro*, Milton is very close to the Elizabethans.

**Comus.** — But *Comus* (1634), Milton's next work, shows the decided growth of a new and distinctly Puritan spirit. In its form, indeed, *Comus* belongs to the earlier age. It is a masque — one of those gorgeous dramatic spectacles which Renaissance England had learned from Italy, the favorite entertainment at the festivals of the rich, with which Ben Jonson so often delighted the Court of James. *Comus* has music and dancing, and it affords the requisite opportunity for scenic effects, yet there breathes through it the growing strain of moral earnestness. It shows us how purity and innocence can thread the darkest and most tangled ways of earth, unharmed and invincible, through the inherent might of goodness. In noble and memorable words Milton declares his faith in this essential power of righteousness, and in the ultimate triumph of good over evil which that power is destined to secure:

“ . . . Against the threats  
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power  
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:

Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,  
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled:  
 Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm  
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.  
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,  
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,  
 Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,  
 It shall be in eternal restless change  
 Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,  
 The pillared firmament is rottenness,  
 And earth's base built on stubble."

**Lycidas.** — In his next poem, the pastoral elegy of *Lycidas* (1637), written in memory of his friend Edward King, a fellow of Christ's College, the space between Milton and the Elizabethans continues to widen. From the enthusiasm for virtue, he passes to an outburst of wrath and denunciation against those in the Church whom he considered the faithless shepherds of the flock.

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,"

but the hour of retribution is at hand; already the

"two-handed engine at the door,  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."

**Travels (1638-1639).** — The first thirty years of Milton's life had thus been lived almost wholly "in the still air of delightful studies." In this long and arduous period of preparation he had learned much from books; he was next to feel the broadening influences of foreign travel. In 1638 he left England and traveled through Paris to Italy, meeting many learned and famous men, among them the old astronomer Galileo. Milton was full of great plans, writing in 1637, "I am pluming my wings for a flight." He was

thinking of a great epic on the history of King Arthur. But in 1639 he changed his course completely. The civil troubles in England seemed gathering to a crisis, and Milton felt that while his countrymen were fighting for liberty, it was base in him to be "traveling abroad for intellectual culture." He returned to England in 1639.

**Milton's Prose Period (1639-1660).** — From the time of his return, to the Restoration in 1660, Milton deliberately put aside his cherished ambitions and pursuits, and freely gave up his life and genius to the service of his country. Except for occasional sonnets, the greatest poet in England forced himself to write prose for more than twenty years. Most of this prose was written in the heat of "hoarse disputes," and is often marred by the bitterness and personal abuse which marked the controversies of that troubled time; but this is redeemed in many places by earnestness and a noble eloquence.

Prominent among the works of this prose period are the *Tractate on Education* (1644), and the splendid *Areopagitica* (1644), a burning plea for the liberty of the press, of which it has been said: "Its defense of books, and the freedom of books, will last as long as there are writers and readers of books." After the execution of Charles I (1649), Milton ranged himself on the side of those who had taken this tremendous step, in a pamphlet on *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; and a month after its publication he was made the Latin, or foreign, Secretary to the newly established Commonwealth. His pen continued to be busy for the state, until in 1652 his eyes failed him through over-use, and he was stricken with total blindness.

In the same year his wife, whom he had married as a young girl of less than half his age, but who had proved



unsuited to him in disposition and education, died. Milton was left with three little girls. In 1656 he married Katherine Woodcock, who lived but little more than a year, and to whom he paid a touching tribute in one of his sonnets.

**Later Poetic Period (1660-1674).** — In these later years of Milton's life, during which he suffered blindness, sorrow, and broken health, the cause for which he had sacrificed so much was lost, and England was brought again under the rule of a Stuart king. Milton had been so vehement an advocate of the Parliament that we wonder at his escape; but, from whatever reason, he was not excepted from the general pardon put forth by Charles II after his return (August 29, 1660). In the riotous years that followed, when England, casting off decency and restraint, plunged into "the mad orgy of the Restoration," Milton entered in earnest upon the composition of *Paradise Lost*, singing with voice

"unchanged  
To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days;  
On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,  
And solitude."

In his little house in Bunhill Fields, near the London in which the pleasure-loving King jested at faith and honor, and held his shameless court amid

". . . the barbarous dissonance  
Of Bacchus and his revellers,"

the old poet lived his life of high contemplation and undaunted labor. At no time does Milton seem to us more worthy of himself; he is so heroic that we hardly dare to pity him. But wherever the fault lay, his

daughters, whose privilege it should have been to minister to him, greatly increased his burdens. They are said to have sold his books without his knowledge, and two of them counseled his maidservant to "cheat him in his marketings."

When we reflect that the oldest daughter was but fourteen at the Restoration, and that the education of all had been neglected, we are inclined to judge less hardly, but we can scarcely wonder that Milton should have sought some means of relief from these intolerable discomforts. This he happily found through his marriage with Elizabeth Minshull in 1663. Yet even when matters were at the worst, Milton seems to have borne them with fortitude, "having a certain serenity of mind not condescending to little things." His one faithful daughter, Deborah, speaks of his cheerfulness under his sufferings from the gout, and describes him as "the soul of conversation." The words of one who visited him at this time help to bring Milton before us, dressed neatly in black, and seated in a large armchair in a room with dark-green hangings, his soft hair falling over his shoulders, his sightless eyes still beautiful and clear.

*Paradise Lost* was published in 1667, and was followed in 1671 by *Paradise Regained*. With the latter poem appeared the noble drama of *Samson Agonistes* (or the Wrestler), and with it Milton's work was ended. He died on November 8, 1674.

**Milton's Ideal of Life.** — We are stimulated and thrilled by the thought of Milton's life, as at the sight of some noble and heroic action. In its whole ideal and in its large results, we feel that it moves habitually on the higher levels, and is animated by no vulgar or ordinary aims. It is much that as a great poet Milton

loved beauty, that as a great scholar he sought after truth. It is more that, above the scholar's devotion to knowledge, Milton set the citizen's devotion to country, the patriot's passionate love of liberty; that above even the employment of his great poetic gift, he set the high resolve to make his life "a true poem," and to live

"As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye."

He has accordingly left us an example of solemn self-consecration to a lofty purpose, early undertaken, and steadfastly and consistently pursued. Milton's life was lived at high tension; he not only set an exacting standard for himself, he was also inclined to impose it upon others. He is so sublime that some of us are inclined to be a trifle ill at ease in his presence, or are apt to be repelled by a strain of severity far different from the sweet companionableness of Shakespeare. In Milton's stringent and austere ideal we miss at times the saving grace of Shakespeare's charity, or we are almost moved to exclaim with Sir Toby:

"Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

In *Samson Agonistes*, when Delilah pleads before her husband that she has sinned through weakness, she is met by an uncompromising reply:

". . . If weakness may excuse,  
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,  
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?  
All wickedness is weakness: that plea, therefore,  
With God or man will gain thee no remission."

From such a rigorous insistence on condemnation in strict accord with the offense, our minds revert to

Portia's inspired plea for mercy, or to Isabella's searching question:

"How would you be,  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are?"

**Paradise Lost.** — This Puritan severity is especially marked in the three great poems of Milton's later life. As a young man he had chosen a purely romantic subject for his projected epic — the story of Arthur; his maturer interests led him to abandon this for a purely religious and doctrinal one. *Paradise Lost*, generally considered Milton's greatest work, is the story of Satan's rebellion against God, of his being hurled out of Heaven with his rebel hosts, and falling for nine days through Chaos and darkness into the depths of Hell. It tells of the creation of the world and of man; "of Man's first disobedience," under Satan's temptation, and of his consequent loss of Paradise. Milton's purpose was to explain the existence of sin and death in the world, "and all our woe," and to "justify the ways of God to men." But the poem is great rather in spite of, than because of, this theological interest. What gives it permanence is Milton's tremendous sweep of imagination and the exalted music of his verse. No poet before him, not even Dante, had conceived so large a stage for the action of his drama. We have not only the physical universe, or the World, as Milton called it, with its ten concentric spheres revolving about the earth, but the vast Empyrean beyond; we have Heaven, with its towers and battlements, while from Heaven's floor the "pendent world," the entire orb of creation, hangs suspended by golden chains. In Pandemonium, "high capital" of Satan, "the infernal peers" sit in council. Moreover, Milton's imagination was entirely adequate

in filling in the details of the action of this cosmic drama, and in conceiving fit and appropriate characters. The actors are not lost on the stage. Milton's persons — God, Satan, the exalted and fallen angels, Adam and Eve — are, like his worlds, conceived and described with an heroic and epic grandeur. And more than this, Milton's poetic utterance is in perfect harmony with the majesty and scope of his imagination. His is the truly epic style. Indeed, *Paradise Lost*, and its sequel *Paradise Regained*, constitute the one great contribution of the English genius to the epic poetry of the world. By the incomparable dignity and majesty of the verse, with its prolonged and solemn music, and the curious involution of its slowly unfolding sentences, we are lifted out of the ordinary or the trivial into the incalculable spaces of that region into which it is the poet's object to transport us. The description of Satan's flight from the gates of Hell, upward through old Night and Chaos, in his search for the newly created World, is a good example of Milton's imaginative power and of his style:

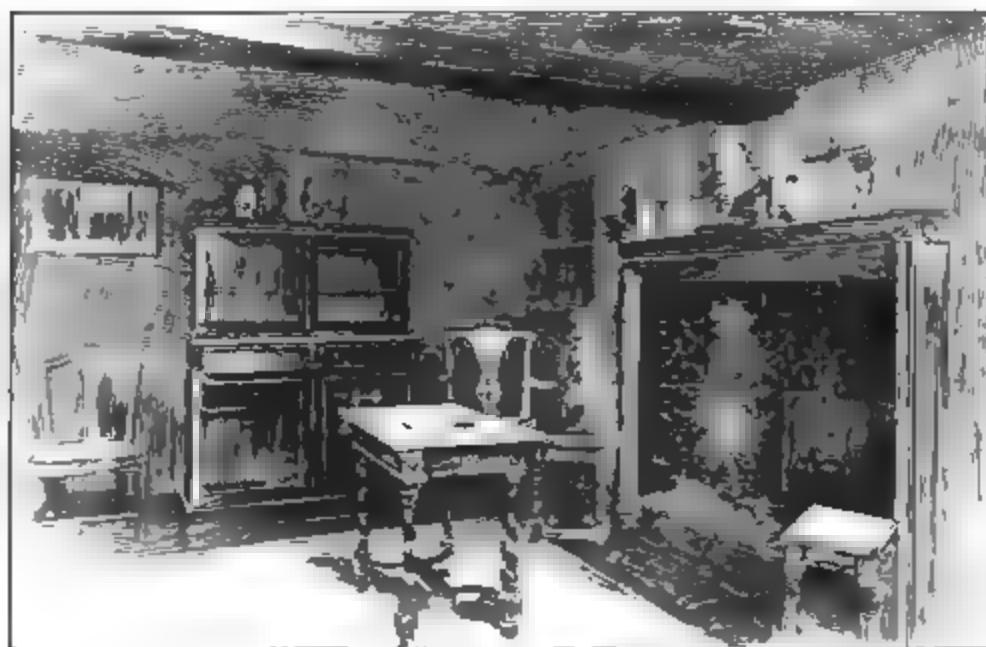
“Into this wild Abyss the wary Fiend  
 Stood on the brink of Hell and looked a while,  
 Pondering his voyage; for no narrow frith  
 He had to cross. Nor was his ear less pealed  
 With noises loud and ruinous (to compare  
 Great things with small) than when Bellona storms  
 With all her battering engines, bent to rase  
 Some capital city; or less than if this frame  
 Of heaven were falling, and these elements  
 In mutiny had from her axle torn  
 The steadfast Earth. At last his sail-broad vans  
 He spreads for flight, and, in the surging smoke  
 Uplifted, spurns the ground; thence many a league,  
 As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides  
 Audacious.”

After falling ten thousand fathoms in space, and floundering on through bog and strait, he mounts again "like a pyramid of fire," and

"Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold  
Far off the empyreal Heaven, extended wide  
In circuit, undetermined square or round,  
With opal towers and battlements adorned  
Of living sapphire, once his native seat,  
And, fast by, hanging in a golden chain,  
This pendent World, in bigness as a star  
Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.  
Thither, full fraught with mischievous revenge,  
Accurst, and in a cursèd hour, he hies."

*Paradise Lost* is not a perfect poem: there are weak places in the argument and glaring inconsistencies in the narrative. In one place, for instance, God is represented as both foreseeing and allowing the fall of man, while in another He is represented as endeavoring to prevent it. He is portrayed as all-wise and all-powerful, and yet we see Him apparently powerless either to hold Satan a prisoner in Hell, or to prevent his entrance into Eden. But while we must admit such inconsistencies, we must not fail to realize the almost unparalleled difficulties of Milton's gigantic undertaking, a task "unattempted" before "in prose or rhyme." For Milton's purpose in *Paradise Lost* was not merely to relate certain stupendous events, it was to enforce certain theological doctrines. Shakespeare contented himself, as a rule, with the faithful portrayal of human life, but Milton's daring ambition carried him beyond this; he set himself not merely to portray man's life, but to explain it. And in this determination to drag the most hidden things to light, Milton shrank from nothing. He did not hesitate to enter the "undiscovered country,"

to pass beyond the limits of space and time, and even in the awful brightness of the highest heaven he never seems to veil his eyes. There is no sense of awe in the presence of the unknown; nothing in heaven or earth undreamed of in his philosophy, nothing that he hesitates to depict and expound. We need not wonder, then, that even Milton's titanic genius proved unequal



In Milton's House, Chalfont St Giles

to such a superhuman task, or that his attempt to explain the mystery of human sin and suffering remains, at best, confused and unsatisfying.

But while we may not altogether pass over its shortcomings, we must remember that *Paradise Lost* is not to be judged as a theological treatise, but rather as a great poem. If from one aspect we feel its inadequacy, from another we are satisfied and uplifted by its inexhaustible power and beauty. Our ability to feel its greatness is a test of our power to appreciate what is great in poetry. Shakespeare had competitors and com-

panions, even while he towered far above them; but Milton is as one who sits enthroned on a great height alone. His sublime epic — into which he put so much of his own lofty, audacious, and uncompromising spirit — remains apart in English poetry, unparalleled and unapproached, in an impressive and splendid isolation.

#### SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE

Our study of Milton has carried us beyond the date of the Restoration, but before we leave the Elizabethans and Puritans, and enter that new England which began with the return of Charles II, we must turn back to the opening of the seventeenth century, and note some salient features in the history of prose. While the deep emotions, high imagination, and poetic fancy which possessed Renaissance England found their fullest and their earliest expression through poetry and the drama, from the close of the sixteenth century they began to ennoble prose also. We have already noted the beginning of a more sustained and majestic prose-style in Hooker; we must now glance at the further development of prose in the hands of some of his greatest and most representative successors.

**Sir Walter Raleigh** (1552–1618) in 1614 published a *History of the World*, which, though tedious and discursive, is illuminated by many noble and poetic passages. Raleigh had known the world as few men know it, its ambitions, its rivalries, its heroism, its splendid successes, its cruel humiliations and defeats, and — imprisoned in the Tower at the close of a life crowded with great exploits — he undertook to write a survey of the course of human history. When we put aside all that seems pedantic or absurd in Raleigh's *History*, when we pass beyond the parade of a now antiquated



learning, and reach the heart of his book, we see that it is the verdict on human life pronounced by a man who had known life well. Shut out at last from an active share in the world's doings, Raleigh, the courtier, the statesman, the colonist, the freebooter, the explorer, the poet, the philosopher, sits down at last in quiet, and asks what does this world mean, and what is its worth. The book, useless or ridiculous as history, is memorable as the personal revelation of a restless and splendid personality. It has the deep religious feeling and the deep melancholy of the English nation: it begins with a noble apostrophe to God, "The Almighty Mover," who "has been pleased to make himself known by the work of the world," and it ends with that passage on the emptiness of earthly ambitions, that tribute to Death the Conqueror, which is one of the glories of English prose: "O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised. Thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet!*"

In such passages, and others which fall but little short of this high level, we see how in the seventeenth century the passion and poetry of the Elizabethans shone out through the less transparent medium of prose.

Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), called by Coleridge the "most eloquent of English divines," was one of the greatest masters of this poetic, or impassioned prose. Read, for instance, this passage on the shortness of man's life, and see how he invests a familiar comparison with freshness and beauty, creating out of old materials

a prose-poem not unworthy to stand beside many a familiar lyric on the same theme. "But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and, at first, it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head and broke its stalk; and, at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman."

**Sir Thomas Browne.** — There was also a quaint scholastic air in some of the seventeenth-century prose-writers, analogous to the extravagances of Donne or his followers in verse. This musty flavor of old learning permeates the fascinating style of SIR THOMAS BROWNE (1605–1682). It is the style of an old-time scholar, full of recondite allusions and fragments from the classics, but it mounts into the loftier regions of poetry and imagination. Browne was a busy and learned physician, who, after taking his degree abroad, settled down at Norwich in 1637, to the practice of his profession. He loved to investigate the odd and the mysterious, and delighted in curious speculations. He was a scientist, but he was above all a poet and a mystic. In his first book, *Religio Medici* (1642–1643) or *Religion of a Physician*, Browne considers the difficulties and doubts that confront one in accepting the teachings of the Bible, and shows that his faith is great enough to overcome them all. He loses himself in the contemplation of God, and in his "solitary and retired imaginations" he remembers that he is not alone. Like Vaughan he finds a divine spark

in his own nature: "There is surely a piece of divinity in us — something that was before the heavens and owes no homage unto the sun." This mystical exaltation is united with a quiet, contemplative melancholy. He surveys the world as from a height; he sees the past in a long retrospect, and he speculates upon the endless procession of generations. He meditates on death and on the life after death, and even the burial rites of various nations and the visible signs of mortality have an interest for him. The discovery of some ancient sepulchral urns containing human bones, in a field in Norfolk, stirs his imagination, and furnishes him with a theme for his *Hydriotaphia*, or *Urn Burial*, one of the most eloquent and characteristic of his works. The thought of "these dead bones" hid a yard underground in their "thin walls of clay," and quietly resting "under the drums and tramlings of three conquests," is the inspiration of one of the noblest passages of English prose. The *Urn Burial* was published in 1658, the year of the death of Oliver Cromwell. But if from one aspect Browne seems remote and withdrawn from the agitations of his time, from another he is as truly the spokesman of its lofty spirituality and melancholy contemplation. He wrote when the vigorous, mundane activity of the Elizabethan era had been succeeded by a more mature and meditative mood. This solemn tone, like the stillness of an autumn twilight after a day of action, pervades some of the noblest spirits of his age. It was in Raleigh when he wrote his *History of the World*; it was in Donne, when, after his fevered and passionate youth, he preached and meditated on death and the hereafter. Indeed, there are passages in Donne's sermons which might well have been written by Browne.

**Isaak Walton** (1593–1683), a London linen-draper, found in country scenes and by the borders of a quiet stream, inspiration of a widely different character. Walton's quiet, unworldly mood, his simple pleasure in Nature and in country sports, shine through his books and make him one of the most restful and companionable of writers. His *Lives*, short, sympathetic sketches of Donne, Hooker, Herbert, and other notable men, are in many respects models of brief biography. His *Complete Angler* (1653) is the first of a long series of charming books in English literature written in praise of the quiet sport of fishing. It is a wholesome book, full of wise thoughts and innocent enjoyment, and has long held a secure place among the masterpieces of English prose.

**Milton as a Prose Writer.** — Finally, we must not forget that Milton, whose work has been already considered, holds one of the highest places among the prose-writers of this time. Milton's prose works deal mostly with the theological and political controversies of his day. They were addressed primarily to the men of his own generation; written to gain some immediate end. Yet in some of his prose there is permanent interest and power. He waged battle for freedom of thought in Church and State, and declared that "while he who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, . . . he who destroys a good book kills reason itself." Milton's greatness, his passion for truth and liberty, his comprehensive scholarship, his sonorous, majestic, and musical style, his instinct for the memorable phrase, triumph over anything that is temporary in his subject and purpose, and make a work addressed to his own age the delight and admiration of later times.



**His Life.** — John Bunyan was born on the outskirts of Elstow, a village about a mile from Bedford, in 1628. His father was a brazier, or tinker, a patcher of old cans or kettles, — and Bunyan was bred to the same humble calling. He was given some elementary instruction, but he afterwards forgot most of the little he had ever learned. When he was in his seventeenth year he



Village of Elstow, where Bunyan was born

served for a short time in the Parliamentary army (1644–1647). But at the close of the Civil War, after this experience of the world outside his village, he returned to Elstow, married a woman as poor as himself, and began a life apparently destined to be undisturbed, monotonous, and respectable.

Bunyan was a sturdy, big-boned, florid-faced, English tinker, every inch a man; yet there was something in him that set him apart from his neighbors. In the midst of those peaceful, commonplace surroundings, he

was tortured by a sense of his own wickedness, by doubts, by temptations to utter terrible blasphemies, by despair. Living, to all outward appearance, the most ordinary of lives, Bunyan's soul became the battle-field of that fierce conflict which he has himself described in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. To understand Bunyan, or *Pilgrim's Progress*, his greatest book, we must realize that in those years of inward torment, Bunyan — poor, narrow-minded, perplexed, but magnificently and utterly in earnest — was making his own painful pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to a City of Peace.

At last he found it. In 1653 he joined a little community of dissenters, and after a time began to preach. After the Restoration he was arrested for preaching in unlicensed conventicles, or meetings, and was thrown into the Bedford gaol. He refused to make the promise to give up preaching which would have given him liberty. "If you let me out to-day," he said, "I will preach again to-morrow." He remained in the gaol for eleven years, supporting himself by making "long-tagged thread laces," preaching to his fellow-prisoners, and writing *Grace Abounding* and several other books. In 1672 the Declaration of Indulgence was passed, an act granting religious liberty both to Roman Catholics and Nonconformists, and Bunyan was released. But three years later, on the repeal of this act, Bunyan, who had resumed his preaching, was again imprisoned. It was during this second imprisonment, which lasted three years, that he began to write *Pilgrim's Progress*. The first part of this marvelous book was published in 1678.

Bunyan wrote many other books after this; the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, and *The Holy War*, the last of which Macaulay declared to be, *Pilgrim's Progress* alone excepted, "the

best allegory that ever was written." In these last years Bunyan rose to great influence among those of his own sect, and was popularly called "Bishop Bunyan." In 1688 exposure to a rain-storm, while he was engaged in a work of mercy, resulted in a sudden illness, and he died in a few days.

**Pilgrim's Progress.** — The popularity of *Pilgrim's Progress* was long confined to readers of the lower and middle classes. It was written for the people by a man of the people. It was written by a dissenter at a time when dissenters were persecuted and despised, and its distinctly religious purpose, as well as the humble station of its author, combined to place it outside the conventional bounds of literature. The polite world disdained it; the critics ignored it, or failed to take it seriously. But in the course of a hundred years the power of the book began to impress the literary and fashionable classes, and to-day the fame of Bunyan's masterpiece is probably greater than it has ever been before. It has been translated into many foreign languages, and it stands with those few supreme books which, like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, remain the delight and admiration of the high and the low, the young and the old, the ignorant and the cultured. What is there in the unpretentious work of "the inspired tinker" that has obtained for it the permanence and the universality of the great classics?

**Its Universal Theme.** — In the first place, Bunyan, sectarian as he was, chose for his allegory a broad and vital theme. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton was concerned with some of the deepest mysteries of theology. When we pass beyond all the splendid poetry, we see that Milton's primary object is to reconcile the existence of sin in the world with the wisdom, goodness, and omnipo-



tence of God. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, Bunyan is not occupied with such abstract and philosophical speculations; his purpose is purely practical, and his appeal is not to the head but to the heart. The keynote of Bunyan's book is the cry of the individual conscience; it is heard in the question of Christian at the very beginning of the allegory, "What shall *I* do to be saved?" Bunyan's appeal is thus direct and personal, for Christian, the pilgrim, is a representative man, and the general treatment of his theme is so broadly human that Christian's pilgrimage becomes the living and dramatic record of man's spiritual progress.

**Its Realism.**—This theme of almost universal interest is not presented in an abstract, or doctrinal form, it is made real by the intensity of Bunyan's earnestness, and picturesque and dramatic by the vividness of his poetic imagination. Christian's experiences are real to us because they were real to Bunyan; because Bunyan himself had sunk in the Slough of Despond, climbed the Hill of Difficulty, and fought his own fight with Apollyon. He could describe these things from bitter experience; he could describe them poetically because he had that power of imagery which distinguishes the poet. He turns instinctively to imagery when he describes his torments in *Grace Abounding*. Describing one of his periods of doubt and depression, he wrote: "I found myself in a miry bog, that shook if I did but stir." In another place he speaks of his "tumultuous thoughts, that did use, like masterless hell-hounds, to roar and bellow, and make an hideous noise within me." It is this inborn power to conceive of the invisible and intangible in objective forms that makes the allegory in *Pilgrim's Progress* so spontaneous, so free from any suggestion of artifice. Bunyan, moreover, was not a

mere visionary, oblivious of the vulgar realities around him; he was a shrewd observer of human life and character, and his intensely spiritual nature was well ballasted with humor and solid common sense. Although *Pilgrim's Progress* purports to be a dream, Bunyan does not transport us to cloud-land. Christian travels through our familiar and everyday world, meeting many very substantial human beings in the course of his journey. The very names of Bunyan's characters are often miracles of characterization. Mr. By-Ends alone, whose judgment always happened to coincide with his worldly advantage, shows Bunyan's satiric humor, his insight into human nature, and his power of dramatic portraiture.

**Bunyan's Style.**—To such enduring qualities in *Pilgrim's Progress*, we must add the remarkable strength, simplicity, and beauty of its style. Like many another Puritan, Bunyan had read and re-read the Bible, until the strong, vigorous, and musical English of the King James Version had become a part of his mental as well as his spiritual life. His style was formed, his images were often taken from this great model, and his prose has much of the grandeur and restraint of his original.

Such, then, are some of the great qualities which have made a book, written without conscious art and with no thought of literary fame, a great classic. When Bunyan wrote, the fine gentlemen of the Restoration, the professional authors and critics, were bent on reforming the language, and were busy declaring the true principles of literary art. The tinker in Bedford gaol knew nothing of these matters. He had something to say, he was constrained to give his message as best he could, but to him the message was the important matter, not the words in which it was delivered. "I could also," he

says in *Grace Abounding*, “have slipped into a style much higher than this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than I have seemed to do; but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me; the Devil did not play in tempting of me: neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of Hell caught hold upon me: wherefore I may not play in relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was.” Here, in brief, is the main source of Bunyan’s power.

IMPORTANT DATES

JAMES I, first of the Stuart kings.....	1603–1625
JOHN MILTON .....	1608–1674
<i>Comus</i> .....	1634
Prose Period .....	1639–1660
<i>Paradise Lost</i> .....	published 1667
KING JAMES VERSION OF THE BIBLE, completed .....	1611
Death of SHAKESPEARE and of FRANCIS BEAUMONT .....	1616
BACON’S <i>Novum Organum</i> .....	published 1620
First Folio edition of Shakespeare’s plays .....	1623
Death of JOHN FLETCHER, dramatist .....	1625
KING CHARLES I .....	1625–1649
John Donne’s <i>Poems</i> .....	published 1633
Death of BEN JONSON .....	1637
Closing of the Theaters by the Puritans .....	1642
Outbreak of the Civil War .....	1642
Birth of JOHN NEWTON, mathematician and scientist .....	1642
SIR THOMAS BROWNE’S <i>Religio Medici</i> .....	1642
ROBERT HERRICK’S <i>Hesperides</i> .....	1648
Commonwealth and Protectorate.....	1649–1660
Death of OLIVER CROMWELL.....	1658
Restoration of the Monarchy in the person of CHARLES II ....	1660

FOREIGN DATES

LOUIS XIII, King of France .....	1610–1643
LOUIS XIV, King of France .....	1643–1715
THIRTY YEARS’ WAR .....	1618–1648

### III. THE FRENCH INFLUENCE

(1660—ABOUT 1750)

#### CHAPTER I

#### THE ENGLAND OF THE RESTORATION

(1660—1700)

“We conquer’d France, but felt our captive’s charms;  
Her arts victorious triumphed o’er our arms;  
Britain, to soft refinements less a foe,  
Wit grew polite, and numbers learn’d to flow.  
Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join  
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,  
The long majestic march, and energy divine.”

— POPE.

THE restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II is one of the important turning points in English history. It is more than a change in government; it marks the beginning of a new England in life, in thought, and in literature. Elizabethan England, with its splendid national enthusiasms, and Puritan England, with its single-minded and almost ruthless passion for liberty and godliness, were past. The Puritan government, which though rigorous had at first been effective, had failed, and the nation, at the return of the King in 1660, was in a far different mood from that which stirred the great Puritan leaders, Cromwell and Milton. A wide-spread reaction had set in against the restraint, the severity, and austerity of Puritan ideals.

In contrast to the religious assurance and unquestioning faith of the Puritans, we find a freer and more daring use of reason by men who place the critical judgment and common sense above enthusiasm or imagination; and it was only natural that literature, which in its most vital interests is always a record of contemporary life, should have reflected this change in the temper of the nation, and, during the next one hundred years, have been profoundly influenced by it in both subject-matter and form.

The most obvious characteristic of the period of the Restoration is its lowered moral tone. The Puritan had attempted a splendid but impossible task — and had failed. He had set up a fixed pattern of righteousness, lofty indeed, but formal, uncompromising, and severe, and had thought to compel men to come up to his standard. He had made "Merrie England" a dismal England; he had forbidden dancing, and made Christmas a fast-day; he had dreamed that because he was virtuous there should "be no more cakes and ale." Then came the day of reckoning. There was something of the healthy savage still in the race. They had been pent in, and hectored, and drilled through a long session, but now school was out, and the reign of the schoolmasters was over. What wonder, then, that joyful crowds greeted the King when he landed at Dover; that his journey to London was a triumphal progress through shouting multitudes; that the bells were set ringing, and the flags flying,—the King had come to enjoy his own again, and his people were in the right mood to enjoy it with him.

But this legitimate pleasure soon went to the extreme of license. The May-poles were set up again; the Puritan Sabbath was disregarded; the brutal sport of bear-

baiting revived. The somber dress, solemn face, and scriptural phrase of the Puritan had become detestable and ridiculous in men's eyes; and many a gay Cavalier, despising this as mere hypocrisy, took pains to show by the openness of his vices that he at least was no hypocrite. King Charles, known as "The Merry Monarch," witty, good-humored, and gifted with an easy charm of manner, was a selfish voluptuary, without shame, patriotism, or honor; and his Court, following his example, was a center of evil influences which corrupted society and defiled literature. Extravagant balls and entertainments, cards, intrigue, and debauchery were the business of the Court. The needs of the government and the nation were neglected. It was an age

"When love was all an easy Monarch's care;  
Seldom at council, never in a war."

Among the upper classes of society, the sense of honor, national and personal, had decayed; and it was unfortunately with the interests of those classes that literature in the last half of the seventeenth century was almost wholly concerned. Gay, dissolute courtiers wrote lyrics, which, although not without lightness and lyrical charm, often show only too clearly the moral depravity of the time. The King was a patron of the drama; and the theaters, which had been practically shut for nearly eighteen years, were soon crowded with fashionable audiences, willing, and even demanding, to be amused with licentious plays. Yet we must remember that there were some who were not swept away with the current, and that the work of Puritanism was not altogether undone. It was after the Restoration that Milton, standing apart from the riot of London, produced his greatest poems; that Isaak Walton wrote his life of

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*George Herbert* (1670), and John Bunyan his *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678–1684). Such men, however, belonged to an older generation, and represented a kind of writing which was rapidly passing out of favor.

**The French Influence and the Reign of Common Sense.** — There were other important characteristics of the literature of the Restoration than its lax morality. To understand the state of England after the Restoration, we must realize that it was not merely a time of reaction from Puritanic restraints, but a time when the higher energies of the nation were temporarily exhausted. Ever since the influence of the Renaissance first stirred the depths of the English nature, and enabled it for the first time to express its full force in literature, ever since then the nation had been living under the strain of strong excitement and heroic endeavor. There had been something large and heroic in the Elizabethan Age; the nation had poured out its strength in great achievements; in literature, it had shown a lavish creative energy; and, following hard upon the age of Shakespeare and the Armada, there had come years no less intense and exacting, of religious ardor and civil conflict, of warring principles and of high ideals. The Restoration found England emotionally exhausted; men had grown suspicious of great emotions; they doubted the wisdom of sacrificing comfort to lofty aims; their temper was cold, worldly, and prosaic, and they forsook enthusiasm for reason and "good sense." Right or wrong, Charles I gave his life for a principle; Charles II, believing in the same principle, did not think it worth the sacrifice of his comforts, and preferred to make any base concession rather than to "start out on his travels again."

Now this hard, prosaic temper is apparent in the

altered style of writing, and in the prevailing theories of literary art. As a great creative and imaginative period had come to an end, men turned instinctively to literary criticism; inspiration was failing and they naturally began to insist upon a greater attention to what they conceived to be the rules of art. Many felt that the English poets of the past, however great their genius, had fallen short of excellence because they neglected, through ignorance or indifference, the rules of composition. One noted critic of the day ridiculed Shakespeare's tragedies and sneered at *Paradise Lost*. There was a feeling that the literature of Shakespeare and Milton needed to be reformed; that the imagination of those poets should have been restrained, and their literary form made more correct. To Pope, the poetry of Cowley and other writers of conceits was

“One glaring Chaos and wild heap of wit.”

Following the example of the French critics and the traditions of Ben Jonson's standards of art, the poets and critics of the time made a close study of the classics. Horace, Vergil, and Juvenal became the great literary models; to them even such distinguished writers as Dryden and Pope turned for examples, precedents, and rules. Poetry became largely imitative in manner, and mechanical in construction. In the time of Pope, riming dictionaries and books of rules were published in large numbers and sold in every bookshop, — although even the classics might have taught the writers of the time that poets were born and not made. Moreover, although the genius of the age was essentially critical, the judgments pronounced in the name of criticism, and the rules laid down, were in many instances strangely one-sided and inconclusive.



The results of all this may be briefly stated. English literature during the age of Dryden and of Pope was dominated by classical or pseudo-classical standards. The writers of the time chose occasional or matter-of-fact subjects. Dryden, for example, wrote poems on the death of Oliver Cromwell, on the return of the King to the throne, on the great events of the year 1666 — the War with Holland, the Great Fire of London. Both Dryden and Pope composed satires on the politics and poets of the day. Theological argument and critical and philosophical essays were cast in poetic form. Purely imaginative works such as Spenser's *Faërie Queene* or Shakespeare's *Tempest* were discredited because they were considered extravagant and incorrect. For the most part, writers followed the advice of a French critic who urged poets to leave glittering rhapsodies to the Italians, and endeavor always to write with "good sense." In short the age of Dryden and of Pope was an age of prose rather than of poetry. England could boast of many keen, vigorous, masculine minds, possessed of a solid understanding, but few capable of seeing, feeling, and recording the everlasting poetry of things.

In style, likewise, the writers of the time followed the rules laid down by the French and Latin critics. Their ideals were those of order and restraint in the use of words; they banished the warmer, more highly colored style for one more controlled and severe. Their aim was to be clear, precise, well-balanced, and moderate, and in this they may be said to have succeeded. They gave to English prose a style which, by its strength, simplicity, and directness, was admirably adapted for all ordinary everyday needs. And similarly by their handling of the heroic couplet<sup>1</sup> they gave to English

<sup>1</sup> The heroic couplet is a verse-scheme consisting of two rimed

poetry a form of expression which was lucid and concise; a medium skilfully adapted to description, argument, or moral teaching, and a marvelous instrument for satire. So far, this new manner was a distinct gain to literature; but it was a gain that brought a great loss with it, for this new style became so supreme that, for a time, it almost altogether replaced the old. The serious limitations of Dryden and his followers, their deficient sense of beauty, their lack of spiritual vision, are reflected in their style. When men exchanged the noble eloquence of Jeremy Taylor for the sensible pedestrian gait of Dryden, when they replaced the rich and complex harmonies of Milton with the thinner melody and measured stroke of the rimed couplet, they were like men who should cease to cultivate the rose, because the potato is a useful article.

## JOHN DRYDEN

(1631-1700)

The changes in literature after the Restoration, in both its spirit and its style, are seen most perfectly in the work of John Dryden, a man of cold, logical intellect, and, in his own province, one of the great masters of our English tongue. Few men have so perfectly represented their age or so manifestly determined the course of literary history. From the Restoration to the end of the century, Dryden dominated English letters, "the greatest man of a little age;" and long

iambic lines, each containing ten syllables or five accents. For example,

"On her white breast a sparkling Cross she wore,  
Which Jews might kiss, and Infidels adore."

— POPE, *The Rape of the Lock*.

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after his death the student of literature sees in both prose and poetry the impress of his powerful personality and literary skill.

**Dryden's Life.** — John Dryden was born at Aldwinkle, a small village in the northeastern part of



John Dryden

Northamptonshire, in 1631. He came of a highly respectable Puritan family, some of his relatives, both on his father's and his mother's side, being active supporters of the Parliamentary cause. He went to Westminster School, London, and in 1650 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Little is known of his life at school or college, but we find him in after years sending his

two sons to Westminster that they might be under the instruction of his old master, and he speaks with gratitude of the solid foundation of learning he obtained there. Dryden took his degree at Cambridge in 1654, and for three years thereafter continued his studies within the walls of the old college.

The beginning of Dryden's poetical career is practically contemporaneous with the Restoration. In 1659, when he was in his twenty-eighth year, he wrote his first important poem, *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Cromwell*. This tribute to the great Puritan was followed a year later by the *Astræa Redux*, an effusive welcome to Charles II upon his "happy restoration and return." Dryden may have been honest in his sudden conversion; nevertheless, this poem, with its strain of absurd flattery, carries with it no conviction of sincerity.

**As a Dramatist.** — If we are ignorant of the motives which led Dryden to change his political faith, the reasons which led to his next step are only too clear. In spite of his Puritan ancestry, he was entirely lacking in that uncompromising independence which was so conspicuous a trait of the Puritan character. Milton felt that the true poet was God's prophet, bound to speak the truth delivered to him: but Dryden made writing a trade; he was quick to feel what the public wanted, and he showed no scruples in adapting his wares to the popular demand. After the Restoration, play-writing was the most lucrative branch of literature; and for about eighteen years (1663–1681) Dryden gave up nearly all his time and energy to writing plays, although he felt that in so doing he was sacrificing his higher success. He writes frankly: "I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be for low comedy, small accidents

and raillery, *I will force my genius to obey it, though with more reputation I could write in verse.*"

Dryden went so far in his efforts "to delight" his age that he produced some comedies whose license was marked even in that lax time. Yet, while he traded in vice, he kept a touch of the Puritan's conscience. In one of the most beautiful of his poems, he cries out in a rare burst of genuine feeling:

"O gracious God! how far have we  
Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy!"

And towards the close of his life, he confesses with manly frankness, "I am sensible, as I ought to be, of the scandal I have given by my loose writings; and make what reparation I am able by this public acknowledgment." There is much that is pathetic and even tragic in this late realization that through the best years of his life his mental powers had largely been misspent. Of all his plays, only one, he says, was "written for himself;"—*All for Love*—"the rest were given to the people."

One poem, *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), broke this period of dramatic activity. It deals with two events of the *wonderful year* 1666, the War with Holland, and the Great Fire of London.

**Satires and Other Works.**—At fifty, Dryden had made but a slight impression as a poet: his reputation rested almost entirely on his plays. Yet at fifty he entered suddenly upon the most splendid period of his career with the publication of his great political satire, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681). Here Dryden takes the biblical story of Absalom's revolt against David the King as an allegory to disclose to the nation the traitorous intent and the evil character of Monmouth and Shaftesbury, who were plotting against King Charles.

After years of apprenticeship, Dryden had come to his own, and we feel at last those distinctive qualities in which he has been seldom approached and never excelled — the impetus of the rapid verse, the keen, discriminating intellect, the epigrammatic brilliancy, and the tireless vigor that animates the whole. Other satiric masterpieces followed, among which *Mac Flecknoe* (1682) is perhaps the best known. In the *Religio Laici*, or Religion of a Layman (1682), and in the *Hind and the Panther* (1687), Dryden showed his extraordinary power of arguing in verse. The first is a declaration of faith in the teachings of the Church of England, the second a lengthy argument in behalf of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, Dryden having changed his religion after the accession of the Roman Catholic King, James II. The “milk-white Hind” represents the Church of Rome, the Panther the Church of England, and the two oddly assorted beasts engage in a lengthy theological argument. But, in spite of the absurdity of its scheme, the poem has great melody, charm, and intellectual power, and shows us Dryden at his best.

**Later Years.** — In 1689, when the Protestant sovereigns, William and Mary, came to the throne, Dryden had many temptations to change his religion again, but this time he stood firm. This single act of constancy stands out in the midst of all the fluctuations of Dryden's career, and at no time of his life is he so worthy of our respect as in the years that followed. He toiled manfully for his support; he wrote plays, translated Vergil and other classic poets, modernized Chaucer, and told some stories from Boccaccio in charming verse. He toiled, — as he tells us a few years before his death, — “struggling with want, oppressed with sickness,” and “curbed” in his genius, yet steady to “his prin-

ciples" and not "dispirited with" his afflictions. He died in 1700, and was buried at the feet of Chaucer in Westminster Abbey.

**Dryden's Work in Prose and Verse.** —In his strength and in his weakness Dryden is the representative of his time. His poetry is professional rather than personal, and occasional rather than spontaneous. Much of it, written in imitation of the manner of Vergil or of Horace, seems to be made from books and not from the intensity of his own feeling or from the depth of his experience. His lines do not carry to the heart, as do those of Milton, or Burns, or Wordsworth. He writes, not out of the fullness of profound emotion, as all the greatest poets have done, but in the strength of a clear, fertile, and active intellect. He is the greatest satirist in the range of English poetry. His verse has clearness, ease, and a vigor which at times is almost brutal; he can be smooth and swift, majestic and sonorous. But in reading Dryden we feel the spiritual limitations of his time; everything seems material and earthly, with no redeeming touch of the divine. He shows little love of Nature, little sense of beauty, little real religion: tenderness, pathos, compassion, and a sense of the "mystery of things" are almost entirely absent from his works. We admire his orderly mind, its perspicacity and balance; and his work may be called great literature, but hardly great poetry.

Dryden's prose is nearly if not quite as important as his verse. His great merit as a prose-writer was that he introduced a plainer style of writing, better adapted to the daily needs of our modern world than the more eloquent, poetical, and involved manner of some of his predecessors. Before this time, prose had been written for the learned first, and only incidentally for the people.

Much of it had been heavy with long Latin words, and with lengthy and tortuous periods, but Dryden chose more simple words and wrote shorter and clearer sentences. English prose thus gained something of the freedom of good talk, as Lowell remarked, and was prepared for the needs of the general reader. Dryden was great also as a literary critic. In a number of letters, essays, and prefaces he discussed the rules of poetry, and with a large grasp of critical principles developed a broad and scholarly criticism in an age that was constantly narrowing its intellectual sympathies.

These eminent qualities gave Dryden a supreme place in the contemporary world of letters and, together with his personality, made him the central figure in literary London. Amiable, modest, generous, learned, he attracted to him some of the best minds of the day. Tradition pictures him as sitting in his own great arm-chair in the sunny bow-window of Will's Coffee House, a red-faced, portly, gray-haired old man—"Glorious John"—the literary law-giver of the young wits and rising authors, who loved to gather around him and listen to his stories of the past. His death marks the end of the century and, in a sense, the end of a literary period, but the tradition of his greatness was handed on to the writers of the next century, and Dryden became to Pope and the men of his day a literary model and authority in subject-matter and in form.

**Other Writers of the Restoration.** — Besides Dryden there were many other writers in the period of the Restoration distinguished for their dramas or for prose works on philosophical or scientific themes. THOMAS OTWAY (1651-1685) and NATHANIEL LEE (1653-1691) wrote several important tragedies; and WILLIAM WYCHERLEY (1640-1715), WILLIAM CONGREVE (1670-1729), JOHN



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VANBRUGH (1666–1726), and GEORGE FARQUHAR (1678–1708) were famous for their witty though frequently immoral comedies. JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704) developed a philosophy in which reason, experience, and observation were considered the surest guides to truth, and which discredited or denied the existence of any innate ideas of God or of morality. And SIR ISAAC NEWTON (1642–1727) contributed to the development of science by his profound studies in mathematics and physics.

### IMPORTANT DATES

CHARLES II, "The Merry Monarch" .....	1660–1685
JOHN DRYDEN .....	1631–1700
His literary activity .....	about 1659–1700
<i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> , Part I, the first of his satires ....	1681
Other dramatists: FARQUHAR, WYCHERLEY, CONGREVE, etc.	
The Great Plague .....	1665
The Great Fire of London .....	1666
MILTON'S <i>Paradise Lost</i> , <i>Paradise Regained</i> , and <i>Samson Agonistes</i> .....	1667–1671
JOHN BUNYAN'S <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> .....	1678
JAMES II .....	1685–1689
Revolution of 1688; Declaration of Rights .....	1689
Reign of WILLIAM AND MARY (House of Orange) .....	1689–1702
JOHN LOCKE'S <i>Essay on the Human Understanding</i> .....	1690
Abolition of the Censorship of the Press .....	1695
JEREMY COLLIER'S <i>Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage</i> .....	1698

### CONTEMPORARY WRITERS IN FRANCE

La Fontaine, <i>Fables</i> .....	1665
The dramatists Molière and Racine.	
Boileau, <i>Art of Poetry</i> .....	1674

## CHAPTER II

### THE AGE OF POPE

(ABOUT 1700-1750)

"In tea-cup times of hood and hoop,  
Or while the patch was worn."

— TENNYSON, *The Talking Oak*.

WE have seen in the preceding chapter how English literature with the gradual weakening of the splendid creative energy that marked the age of Elizabeth became, in the hands of Dryden and his contemporaries, less national, less imaginative, and less truly poetic. Though great in his command of the English language and in his power of versification, Dryden had neither the broad humanity and daring originality of Shakespeare, nor the majesty and profound sincerity of Milton. In a worldly and prosaic age, he had written for the Court rather than for the nation, and had deliberately chosen for poetic treatment subjects that were more fit for prose.

The Age of Queen Anne, or the first half of the eighteenth century, continued very largely the poetic traditions of the Restoration. Dryden, as we have seen, like Ben Jonson before him, had, by reason of his personal influence and by the brilliancy of his talk, wielded a wide-spread influence on his contemporaries. As the literary dictator of his age, he had set the standards of taste and of correct writing, and these proved to be so

in harmony with the spirit of the time that for fifty years after his death they prevailed with even greater strength as the standards of his successors. The age of Pope, like that of Dryden, was an age of prose. Common sense, reason, conformity with the classic rules of composition, continued to prevail over imagination, passion, and independence in thought and style. On the theory that they could be made poetical by the outward adornments of rime and rhythm, the most commonplace and prosaic subjects were treated in verse. One poet discussed the raising of sheep, the treatment of their diseases, and the details of the manufacture of woolens; another the *Art of Preserving Health*; while another set forth the advantages of fresh air and exercise. And in this way the distinction between poetry and prose was too often lost. Even the greatest poet of the time confined himself almost entirely to satiric, moral, and didactic themes. Pope writes personal and political satires, critical and philosophical essays, and lengthy epistles in verse. He and his school seem to have believed that poetic excellence consists not in genuine and sincere poetic feeling and imagery, but in smooth versification, in elegance and propriety of language, and in the terse, pointed, and brilliant expression of thought, — thought that they had taken usually at second hand. It was an age when less value was placed upon original matter than upon finished style; when poets were contented to write

“What oft was thought, but ne’er so well express’d.”

As the result of this care for style, a manner of verse was elaborated which reflects with striking exactness the merits and the limitations of its careful builders. It is generally clear, fluent, and flexible, often clever,

often epigrammatic; it can express a trite thought, or moral precept, in a neat and easily remembered couplet; it can describe a game of cards, or a muddy London street after a shower, with vividness and accuracy. But we feel that there is something about it which is formal, mechanical, artificial; that it does not speak for humanity, but for the literary and social London of Queen Anne; that it moves on the easy level of the worldly and the conventional, incapable of comprehending the tragic depths of man's anguish, or the heights to which, at rare moments, his spirit can ascend.

**The Literature of the Town.** — Literature in the age of Pope was, in every sense, a literature of the town; born in the town, written mainly for the town, and often portraying the life of the town to the minutest detail. The London of Pope is even more wonderfully alive to us through literature than the London of Shakespeare. We can see its ill-paved streets with their narrow sidewalks and their running gutters; we know Grub Street, where obscure authors fought with debts and starvation; the old Fleet prison; the gay boating parties on the Thames; the pleasure-gardens where society drank and flirted, listened to the music, and exclaimed at the fireworks. All that restless, gay, animated life is still before us; the beauty in her sedan chair, the beau with his lace ruffles and his flowing wig; and we can imagine the courtly presentation of the snuff-box, or the flutter of the fan.

But this brilliant surface was but a thin veneer, and beneath it life was vulgar, vicious, and cruel. The age which prided itself on its polish and politeness indulged in bull-baiting and cock-fights; its young aristocrats, wandering in drunken frolics through the ill-lighted London streets, habitually committed the most shocking

outrages on inoffending passengers. Drunkenness, says a high authority, "became for the first time a national vice." It was confined to no class of society, and there is hardly an author of the so-called Augustan Age who was entirely free from it. The underlying brutality and coarseness of the age in thought and action stain the pages of its literature; its misanthropy, its petty spites and literary rivalries, break out in slanderous abuse, and bitter, mirthless satires. On every side are indications of a low moral tone. At the beginning of the century the Church was lifeless and worldly, and its great places were intrigued for and sought after as political spoil. Public life was debased, and bribery was regarded as a regular feature in the conduct of government. Many of the greatest men of the time, disgusted with the mercenary spirit and low aims which surrounded them, lost confidence in human virtue, and expressed — sometimes with terrible power — their cynical contempt for man, and their hatred of his petty world. Yet even at this time the higher and nobler elements of the English character were struggling to reassert themselves, and long before the death of Pope the spiritual redemption of England had begun.

## ALEXANDER POPE

(1688–1744)

“He [Dryden] died, nevertheless, in a good old age, possessed of the Kingdom of Wit, and was succeeded by King Alexander, surnamed Pope.

“This prince enjoyed the crown many years, and is thought to have stretched the prerogative much farther than his predecessor.”

— FIELDING, *The Covent Garden Journal*, No. 23.

“As truly as Shakespeare is the poet of man, as God made him, dealing with great passions and innate motives, so truly is Pope the poet of society, the delineator of manners, the exposé of those motives which may be called *acquired*, —”

— LOWELL, *Pope*.

Pope was beyond all question the poet who represented most truly the brilliant, narrow, and self-centered life of the London of Queen Anne. There were other men possessed of keener intellect and more penetrating vision, who were above the petty bickerings of the time, and who saw through its shallow optimism; but Pope, by reason of his scintillating wit, his bitter, satirical attacks upon his enemies, his brilliant, pointed expression, and his contentment with the commonplaces of thought, is most truly the child of his age.

In many ways Pope's story is both painful and pitiable. He himself spoke of his life as “a long disease” and he spoke truly. His delicacy of constitution, his nervous sensibility, affected his whole life and character; and we cannot help feeling the narrowness, bitterness, and irritability of the invalid in his work. Yet there was lodged in his weak and deformed body a spirit of indomitable persistence and courage. A nervous invalid, small, fragile, misshapen; his thin face, drawn as if with pain, was yet alive with an eager intellect, and lit with the large, brilliant eyes of the poet. And in

a brutal time that spared neither the weak nor the unfortunate, he won and kept the headship of British letters.

**His Life.** — Alexander Pope was born in London in 1688. His family were Roman Catholics, and in the years immediately following the deposition of James II



Alexander Pope

the feeling against persons of that faith was very strong. Almost from the first, therefore, Pope's religion set him apart, and stood in the way of his worldly advancement. Included on account of his religion among a "hated minority," he grew up entirely outside of the regular educational system of his country, and separated from the youth of his own age, who would have been his

natural companions. His education was accordingly desultory and superficial. He had some instruction from a priest, and he studied for a short time at a Roman Catholic seminary near Winchester. The better part of his education he gained for himself. A lonely and precocious child, he found his resource and delight in books, and especially in poetry. He read, according to his own account, without any design but that of pleasing himself, "like a boy gathering flowers in the fields just as they fell in his way." Latin, Greek, and French he for the most part taught himself. At eight years of age, he read a translation of Homer, "the great edition with pictures," and also one of Ovid. He read voraciously many of the English and foreign poets, and began early to make verses. Indeed from his first years it had been his ambition to write. As a boy of twelve he had seen the great Dryden at Will's Coffee-house; and at the same age he had composed an epic poem. His father would set him to writing verses, we are told, and then criticize them severely if they failed to come up to his standards. But this constant application soon broke the boy's health, and "ruined his constitution." His father took a house at Binfield, a village near Windsor Forest. In this beautiful retreat, then much wilder and more thickly wooded than at present, the greater part of Pope's youth was spent. There the lad of sixteen rode horseback in the forest and discussed the classics with Sir William Trumbull, a man past sixty and a former Secretary of State. By hard and careful study and by incessant practice, Pope was making himself master of his art, and by his precocious talents was winning the attention and friendship of some of the most distinguished men.

**The Pastorals.** — Pope's first literary venture was the



publication of the *Pastorals* (1709), a series of poems treating of shepherd life and the four seasons, largely in imitation of Theocritus and Vergil. The poems are noteworthy for the smooth and even flow of the verse, but not for originality of treatment, or for any real understanding of pastoral life. Although the scenes are laid in England, they are not drawn true to English landscape or English character. Classic names are used, heathen gods and goddesses are domesticated in England, and Apollo is to be gladdened by the sacrifice of a "milk-white bull" near the banks of the Thames. The poems are artificial because the poet had in mind only the rules of the critics and the models of the ancients, and not the actual life of real shepherds, its rustic labors and pleasures, or any of its simple tenderness. Pope was here breaking his own admirable rule, "to know thoroughly what one writes about, and not be affected." But we must remember that these poems were written when Pope was but sixteen years old, and that they were little more than poetical exercises.

**Essay on Criticism.** — Pope's next publication, *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), took London by storm. It is a didactic poem in which many of the established rules of composition are set forth in a terse and clever fashion. To us its thoughts seem trite, its subject unsuitable for poetic treatment, but to the men of the early eighteenth century it seemed to be the final word on literary criticism, and its form to be perfectly fitting. To us the *Essay on Criticism* is interesting chiefly because it is quotable. All through it we find couplets in which an idea, often commonplace enough, is packed into a form so terse, striking, and remarkable, that it has become firmly embedded in our ordinary thought and speech. Through his power to translate a current

thought into an almost proverbial form, Pope has probably enriched the language with more phrases than any other writer save Shakespeare:

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”

“ To err is human, to forgive divine.”

“ For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

Such quotable bits as these are used by thousands who are entirely ignorant of their source.

**The Rape of the Lock.** — In 1712 Pope published the first version of *The Rape of the Lock*, a poem which in its finished form De Quincey spoke of as “the most exquisite monument of the playful fancy that universal literature offers.” It is a delicate, graceful satire, original and witty, of the idle, pleasure-seeking life of the beaux and belles of the time; and by its ingenious fancies and poetic invention it entitles Pope to a high place in one province of the poet’s art. *The Rape of the Lock* introduces us to a little world of frivolity and fashion, busy with its pleasures, its dressing, flirting, and card-playing, in the old London of Queen Anne. In those days, fashion, wit, literature, and politics met in London. There — men thought — was the life of England; outside lay a vague region, little thought of and seldom visited; a dull place with stupid squires, and muddy roads, where every one was behind the times. The town was supreme; and Pope, the poet of the town, represented its supremacy.

*The Rape of the Lock* literally grew out of that artificial society which it depicts and satirizes, for it was suggested by an actual occurrence in the fashionable world. Lord Petre, a young nobleman of twenty, pos-

essed himself of a lock of hair belonging to a famous beauty of the day, Mistress Arabella Fermor. The result was a serious misunderstanding, and Pope was asked to write a poem that should put the whole incident in an absurd light and restore good-humor. Pope acted on the suggestion and produced the most perfect mock-heroic poem in the literature of England, if not in the literature of the world.

*The Rape of the Lock* is the story of a day in the life of a London beauty. We see Belinda luxuriously slumbering on till noon, when her lap-dog Shock awakens her. We are present at her toilet, and watch the progress of "the sacred rites of pride." We see her with a gay party on its way up the Thames to Hampton Court, smiling impartially upon the "well-dressed youths" that crowd about her, the very type of liveliness, tact, and coquetry. We follow the party through the game of ombre, and the coffee, until we reach the tragic catastrophe of the severed curl. Where can we find so light, so poetical, a treatment of things which we think of as trivial or ordinary? Here is the epic of the frivolous: true to Pope's world, but true also with a little change of dress and scene to the world of the pleasure-seeker in Babylon, Rome, or New York. Pope suggests to us the vanity and shallowness of this life; and, by celebrating its inanities with the lofty dignity of the Homeric epic, he insensibly leads us to measure this petty world by the large standards of the heroic age.

**Translations and Commentaries.** — For ten or twelve years after the publication of *The Rape of the Lock*, Pope was chiefly engaged in the work of editing and translating, although it had been his desire to write an epic poem. Pope's father was old, and the family fortunes were not prospering; so the poet turned from

original work to the more profitable task of translation. He began with Homer's *Iliad*, and, in spite of a frail constitution and a very imperfect knowledge of Greek, succeeded in translating with credit not only the *Iliad* but the *Odyssey*. In 1725 appeared his edition of the works of Shakespeare, which, though far from showing a sympathetic or true understanding of the great Elizabethan, is evidence that even the narrow and artificial age of Queen Anne found in Shakespeare an art and wisdom worthy of this tribute from its greatest poet.

**Twickenham.** — Pope made altogether about £900 by his translations of Homer, a very large sum for those days. Part of this he determined to invest in a house and grounds at Twickenham, on the bank of the Thames, about twelve miles above London. There were woods there and a lawn sloping to the river; and the poet delighted to adorn and cultivate his grounds, and to dress Nature "to advantage." He built a tunnel under the public road that ran through his place and called it his "grotto." On the walls and roof of this "grotto" were stuck shells, "pieces of looking-glass," bits of spar, and fragments of ores and lava. He had also a temple "wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner." In this famous retreat at Twickenham, where nature was polished by art, and incrustated with glittering ornaments, this poet of the artificial held his Court. Here came John Gay, the poet, and the great and terrible Dean Swift; here, Pope tells us, the brilliant Lord Bolingbroke, "nobly pensive," meditated in his "Egerian grot."

**The Dunciad.** — At thirty-seven, then, Pope had made his fortune and his reputation, and he was in a position to write what he pleased. Unfortunately, however, one of the first uses he made of his liberty was in many respects an unworthy and an undignified one — the

writing of the *Dunciad*, or Epic of the Dunces. The literary London of Pope's day, notwithstanding the great names it has handed down to us, was for the most part a provincial and self-centered community. The age was one of bitter quarrels and violent partisanship. Stinging personal invective and abuse were aimed not only at a man's opinions, but at his appearance, his morals, and even at the members of his family. It was an age in which poetry was often degraded to the service of private malice and revenge, and became the handmaid of petty factional disputes. Pope, in this respect, was not above his time; he was rather one of the greatest offenders. His success had excited the envy of less fortunate authors; his disposition, and in part his religion, had made him many enemies; while he, on his side, with his insatiable vanity and his high-strung organization, was easily touched to passionate resentment. In the *Dunciad*, Pope sought to destroy his enemies by a single blow, to crush the small worms and caterpillars of Grub Street, and to discredit all pretenders to the throne of wit, which King Pope himself occupied. The plan of the *Dunciad* bears some resemblance to Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*, but where Dryden regards his victim with an air of assured superiority and amused unconcern, Pope shrieks out his unsavory abuse as one who engages in a street fight on equal terms. He pitilessly uncovers the misery of the obscure literary hack, starving in his garret; "he revels," says Thackeray, "in base descriptions of poor men's want." In short, we feel that Pope's satire is prompted by personal hatred rather than by any large-spirited abhorrence of public wrongs. As Dr. Johnson very sensibly observes: "Whom did it concern to know that one scribbler or another was a dunce?"

**The Essay on Man.** — The closing period of Pope's literary career contains some of his most finished and most brilliant work. Especially famous is *The Essay on Man*, a philosophical poem dealing with man's place in the universe, his mental powers, and the conditions of his happiness. The poem is valuable, not for its philosophical argument, — which is very imperfect, and only partly understood by the author himself, — but for its apt sayings, its compact and memorable bits of trite morality. Pope was never a profound, consistent, or original thinker, but he had something which may fairly be called wisdom, — the wisdom of a close, if superficial, observer of life and manners, as he knew them in the club, the drawing-room, and the street.

The chief work of Pope's last years was the addition of a fourth book to the *Dunciad*, which is justly celebrated for its magnificent close. His feeble frame was shaken by illness and the end was at hand. He died quietly at his villa in 1744, and was buried in the Twickenham church near the monument he had erected to his parents.

**Pope the Spokesman of His Time.** — It is almost impossible for readers and critics of this generation to be fair to Pope, either as a poet or as a man. To most of us he is the spokesman of a dead time, separated from ours by the most fundamental differences in its ideals of literature and of life. So absolutely is he bound up with that time that we must try to enter it in imagination if we would understand and sympathize with its typical poet. He set its world of fashion before us in *The Rape of the Lock*, he unveiled the jealousy and wretchedness of its literary class in the *Dunciad*, he made himself the mouthpiece of one of its leading philosophers in the *Essay on Man*. He illustrates its desire

for perfection of style, its cynical disbelief in the possibility of virtue in man or woman. His world was narrow and ignoble; but, such as it was, he interpreted it with the minuteness and truth of a great artist.

**His Character.** — When we turn from Pope's writings to the man himself, we hesitate between contempt and pity. He was greedy for praise, inordinately vain, and painfully sensitive to criticism; when his self-love was wounded he retaliated with petty malice, rare even in the history of genius. He resorted to equivocations, or direct falsehood, to advance his reputation; he delighted in underhand methods and small intrigues, so that, in the famous phrase, "he hardly drank tea without a stratagem." Yet he was neither cold-hearted nor selfish; he loved his parents and tended them with a touching and beautiful devotion. He had a brave, independent spirit; he fought, an invalid, against the world; a cripple, but with the heart of a soldier. There is much in his life that cannot be tolerated or defended, but there is also something to admire.

#### AUTHORSHIP IN THE AGE OF POPE AND THE RISE OF THE NEW PROSE

One of the important features of the literary history of England, during the latter seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, is the change which took place in the position of the man of letters. Before this time it had been almost impossible to make a living by writing, unless one wrote for the stage. Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and nearly all of the writers who supported themselves entirely by the pen, were dramatists, while those who were not dramatists were not entirely dependent on what they earned

by their literary work. Thus Hooker was a clergyman, Sir Thomas Browne a physician, Isaak Walton a linen-draper; while Wyatt and Surrey, Sidney and Raleigh, represent the large class of courtiers and gentlemen to whom literature was not a profession but an occasional pursuit. Even in the latter half of the seventeenth century, Dryden felt himself forced to write plays for a livelihood, although convinced that his talents lay in another direction. The explanation of this is very simple; writing did not pay as a profession, because many crowded to the theaters who would not or could not read a book.

**Effect on Authorship of the Revolution of 1688.** — Toward the end of the seventeenth century, however, these conditions began to change; it became possible for a writer to make a career for himself through literature, without being compelled to write for the stage. This was due principally to the fact that the government, finding literature useful in guiding or forming public opinion, employed authors to write in its service, and rewarded them with a pension, an embassy, or some public office. This practice may have been partly due to the example of Dryden, who had shown by his political satires and by his timely advocacy of the Roman Church how strong an influence literature could exert on the public mind; but it was largely brought about by the political condition of affairs after the Revolution of 1688. In that year, James II, the brother of Charles II, and the last of the Stuart Kings, was forced to abdicate, and William and Mary, respectively the nephew and daughter of James, were by act of Parliament made joint sovereigns of England. One of the most important results of this was a great increase in the power of Parliament. These sovereigns and their successors did



not rule by a "Divine Right," as the Stuarts had claimed to do, but by the will and authority of Parliament. Under these circumstances the power of the Crown and the importance of the Court declined, and the control of affairs passed more and more into the hands of the great political leaders and their followers, especially in the House of Commons. As the position of these leaders was in turn dependent on the support of the people, there was naturally an eager contest between the two great political parties, Whig and Tory, for the sanction of public opinion. Each side realized that capable writers could do much to win the public to its support. Such a state of things could not but bring about a great change in the author's position. Men of letters began to share in the work of the government; they were brought into frequent contact with the governing class; and the successful writer, treated as an equal by great nobles and leading statesmen, obtained a comfortable income through official patronage. Among many authors rewarded by the government at this time were the great prose satirist Jonathan Swift, who was made Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin; and Joseph Addison, who rose to the high post of Secretary of State.

**Growth of the Reading Public.** — But while literature was thus largely dependent upon political patronage, or the favor of some distinguished patron to whom the struggling author dedicated his book, the increase in the reading-class was already preparing the way for a yet greater and more lasting change. Ever since the Restoration the wealth of the nation had steadily increased. Trade with the Colonies grew rapidly; and, as the commercial class became wealthier, it gained in social and political importance. Dr. Johnson declared

that "an English merchant was a new species of gentleman." Formerly there had been very few readers outside of the aristocratic or scholarly circles, but now, as the commercial class increased in wealth and consequence, and as they grew to realize their power in the state, the number of those who bought and read books increased also. While in Dryden's time the appeal of literature had been chiefly to the Court, that is, to the King and nobles, in Pope's and Addison's day it was directed principally to the more democratic society of club and coffee-house, to the class commonly known as the "Town."

**The Freedom of the Press. Coffee-Houses.**—Other influences besides the spread of education were slowly and silently adding to the great army of readers. The establishment of the freedom of the press, in 1695, — which Milton had pleaded for so eloquently, — opened the way to a fuller and freer discussion of public questions, and led to the founding of several newspapers and periodicals, read by many who never opened larger and more formidable works. London was the natural center of this intellectual activity; and in London the coffee-houses, the meeting-places of statesmen, wits, merchants, and fashionable idlers, did much to quicken and enlarge the mental life of the town. The first coffee-house in England had been started about the middle of the seventeenth century, and by Queen Anne's time, coffee-houses had become an established and important feature of London life. One writer estimated that in 1708 there were nearly three thousand of these coffee-houses in London alone. The coffee-house resembled the modern club; but it was less expensive, less exclusive, and less luxurious. There the Londoner gossiped with his friends, read and wrote his letters, and enjoyed his

coffee and his pipe. The most famous of these coffee-houses were *Will's*, devoted to literature and poetry; the *Grecian*, devoted to learning; *St. James's*, the center of political news and discussions; and *Buttons'*, where Addison dined and spent five or six hours a day. Each had its circle of wits and great men; and each its chief oracle, who, by reason of his superior learning and brilliant talk, ruled it over the others. We can imagine the effect of the incessant discussions, daily, almost hourly, carried on in these thousands of places of public resort. In these coffee-houses, writes a foreign observer, "you have all manner of news; you have a good Fire, which you may sit by as long as you please; you have a Dish of Coffee, you meet your friends for the Transaction of Business, and all for a penny, if you don't care to spend more."

**The Rise of the New Prose.** — All these conditions, political, commercial, or social, favored the rise of a new kind of prose literature, and tended to give prose a wider influence. Dryden and several other writers of the preceding century had simplified prose style, aiming to make it clear, direct, and forceful, rather than rhetorical or pedantically learned. This easier prose continued in favor during the first part of the eighteenth century, and in the hands of Steele and Addison received a more elegant and classic finish. Periodicals were started, containing brief essays, sketches, and sometimes stories; and these pleased the taste of the town. Sometimes these essays pictured some aspect of the life of the day; sometimes they caught the floating talk of the clubs and coffee-houses, and gave it a witty, brief, and graceful literary form. In the hands of Steele and Addison, this new prose became a great social and educational force; and in those of Defoe and Swift, a powerful influence in politics.

## SIR RICHARD STEELE

(1672-1729)

"If Steele is not our friend, he is nothing. He is by no means the most brilliant of wits nor the deepest of thinkers; but he is our friend: we love him as children love their love with an A, because he is amiable."

—THACKERAY.

Thackeray spoke truly when he called Steele "our friend." With Goldsmith, he is one of the most lovable of English authors. He had his weaknesses, although they have been greatly exaggerated; but they were the faults of a warm-hearted, heedless nature, essentially high-minded and noble, and full of a sincere humility of spirit. It is easy to love Steele, but men are just beginning to see more clearly how great a work this man did for England, careless and easy-going as he seems, and to know that there is something in him that not only wins our love, but commands our respect and admiration.

**Steele's Life.** — Richard Steele, or "Dick" Steele, as his friends called him, was born in Dublin in 1672, the year of the birth of Addison, the great writer whose name was to be so closely associated with his own. When he was very young he was left an orphan, and was cared for by an uncle, who secured his admission to the Charterhouse School in London. In one of his essays Steele tells of the impression his father's death made upon his childish mind. He was then too young to realize what had happened, but some vague "instinct of sorrow" reached him through his mother's grief; this, he writes, "seized my very soul and has made pity the weakness of my heart ever since."

From the Charterhouse, where he began his long friendship with Addison, Steele went to Oxford; but he left, before taking his degree, to enlist in the Horse Guards. By 1700 he was Captain Steele, he had published verses, and had made the acquaintance of some of the wits of the town. The life was full of temptations, especially for a young officer of an improvident and emotional disposition and high spirits, and these temptations Steele did not always successfully resist. His life in truth was far better than that of many of the men about him; and, unlike many others, he was quick to repent of a fault, and ready to confess it with a singular frankness. So, he tells us, "he writ for his own private use, a little book called the *Christian Hero*, with a design principally to fix upon his own Mind a strong Impression of Virtue and Religion, in opposition to a stronger Propensity towards unwarrantable Pleasures." Steele next wrote several comedies, in which he set himself to purify the thoughts and correct the vulgarity and wickedness of his age. Steele's lifelong purpose was to separate wit from immorality, and to show that it is possible to be decent without being dull. Since the accession of William and Mary, the better side of the English nature had been fighting against the moral corruption which had disfigured society after the Restoration: associations had been formed for the *Reformation of Manners*, and Jeremy Collier had filed a sweeping indictment against the stage. But now vice and folly were to be arrested by two writers whose weapons were to prove more effective than the angriest invective, writers whose playful humor could make frivolity ridiculous, whose kindly satire provoked no resentment, and insensibly enlisted the reader's sympathies on the side of virtue.

**Periodicals. The Tatler.** — In 1709 Steele began the publication of a periodical which he called the *Tatler*, an event which marks the beginning of a new era in English prose. Before this time there had been a number of papers and periodicals in England, but Steele's was the first to gain a wide-spread influence. The paper consisted of but one folio sheet, with double columns; and was sold for a penny. It was published three times a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the days when the mail left London for the country. It aimed not so much to print the news as to entertain, by its familiar style and its broad human spirit, the masses of English men and women, in town and country, who would not read more learned books; and while entertaining them, to lead them to a more worthy life morally and mentally. Under the pen-name of Isaac Bickerstaff, and in the character of an elderly, good-humored, and fastidious gentleman, Steele set himself up as the chief authority in the town on proper behavior and dress. He criticized and condemned, always in a quiet and gentlemanly way, the extremes of fashion, — such as the wearing of "blue and red stockings in mourning," the fopperies of "smart fellows" about town, the vices of gaming, the absurdity of duels, and of the code of honor that made them possible. "If a fine lady thinks fit to giggle at church," he wrote, "or a great beau come in drunk to a play, either shall be sure to hear of it in my ensuing paper." He gave his readers the latest topics "of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment," talked of at White's Chocolate-house; the discussions at Will's Coffee-house of poetry and of the latest play; and the "foreign and domestic news," from St. James's. He promises them that "when a Toast or Wit is first pronounced such" by the town, they

shall have the first advice of the fact. With ready humor he describes such typical characters as the Pretty Fellow, the Very Pretty Fellow, the Rake, and the Coquette; and throughout his papers shows a chivalrous consideration for women. Thackeray says, "All women especially are bound to be grateful to Steele. . . . It was Steele who first began to pay a manly homage to their goodness and understanding as well as to their tenderness and beauty."

The wit, elegance, vivacity, truth of observation, and delicate raillery found in these sketches made the *Tatler* a success from the first. Queen Anne read it at the breakfast table; and it was said to have attracted more customers to the coffee-houses "than all the other News Papers put together." Before long Steele's old friend Addison began to write for the *Tatler*, and after it had run for about a year and a half became a regular contributor. Thus the two greatest essayists and reformers of the day, sharing the same high purpose, and united by an almost life-long friendship, came to work side by side. The *Tatler* was discontinued January second, 1711; and on the first of the following March, Addison and Steele started a yet more famous periodical, the *Spectator*, which appeared every day except Sunday.

**Political Activity.** — But Steele was not only an essayist; he was a busy politician as well. An ardent Whig, he stoutly defended the succession of the House of Hanover. In 1715, when George I of Hanover came to the throne, Steele was knighted, and rewarded with several lucrative offices. But as he was sanguine, careless, and improvident, he found himself constantly involved in money difficulties, and he struggled with debts even to the end.

**Retirement and Death.** — In 1724 Steele left London

and retired to a country-place in Wales, broken in health. Since he had left Oxford some thirty years before, he had lived in the thick of the contest, playing his part in that world of the capital, in which the activities of the whole nation were focused. He had been soldier, dramatist, government-official, editor, politician, and theatrical manager; he had been intimate with the greatest Englishmen of his time; he had known success and disappointment, praise and abuse, and he had fought a brave fight. He had not always been wise or prudent, but he had held true, on the whole, to high ideals; and in some wonderful way he had kept his hopeful spirit and kind heart through it all. He died in 1729.

**Character.** — In Steele's writings, and especially in his letters, we see the man as he was. He wrote frankly and carelessly, and he was transparently honest and direct. His unaffected goodness, his large-hearted human sympathy, shine out through his works. We see in them a man of a sincerely religious nature, who loved his fellows, who was tender towards suffering, devoted to his wife and children, loyal to his friends. His was perhaps the largest, most generous, and most human spirit of his time. In an age of literary bickerings, jealousies, and personal abuse, Steele maintained a wholesome tolerance and sweetness in his relations with the world.

**Steele's Work.** — Steele's writings are unequal, and every one agrees that they lack the peculiar charm and finish of Addison's; but their purpose is as high, their pathos at times warmer and deeper. It was Steele, moreover, who led the way in which Addison followed, who originated what Addison brought to perfection. We may then respect Steele, knowing what he did and what he was. "As for my labours," he writes, "if



they wear but one impertinence out of human life, destroy a single vice, or give a morning's cheerfulness to an honest mind; in short, if the world can be but one virtue the better or in any degree less vicious, or receive from them the smallest addition to their innocent diversions; I shall not think my pains, or indeed my life, to have been spent in vain."

### JOSEPH ADDISON

(1672-1719)

"He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character, above all Greek, above all Roman fame. . . . Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

—DR. JOHNSON.

". . . One whose fires  
True genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires;  
Blest with each talent and each art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease" —  
— POPE'S *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

Joseph Addison, one of the most charming of English prose-writers, and one of the wisest and most kindly of social reformers, was born at his father's rectory at Milston, Wiltshire, in 1672. His father, who became Dean of Lichfield Cathedral, was a kindly scholar of some literary ability, and Addison's earliest impressions of life were gained in a refined and happy home. He went to the Charterhouse School, where he formed his memorable friendship with "Dick" Steele, and thence to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he led a quiet, studious life. He had a liking for Latin literature, and was fond of walking on the shaded path — now known as Addison's Walk — along the banks of the river Cher-

well. The Church seemed the natural career for a young man of Addison's position and character, but an unforeseen opportunity turned the course of his life in another direction. His scholarship and his literary gifts had attracted the notice of two leaders of the Whig



Joseph Addison

party, who, anxious no doubt to secure for the Whigs the services of a promising young writer, obtained a pension for Addison which he was to use in foreign travel in preparation for a public career. Accordingly, in 1699, he left for the Continent, visiting France, Italy, and Switzerland, writing a little and observing much. But the political changes which followed King Wil-

liam's death in 1702, lost Addison his pension; he returned home in the following year with no certain prospects, and, as Dr. Johnson quaintly says, "at full leisure for the cultivation of his mind." But it was not long before Addison's opportunity came. In 1704, Marlborough, the most brilliant soldier of the age, won the great battle of Blenheim against the French; and Addison was chosen by the government to write a poem that should fittingly celebrate the great victory. Addison at this time was miserably poor; he lived, we are told, up three flights of stairs over a small shop in the Haymarket; his friends were out of power, and he was almost unknown. But his poem, *The Campaign*, which he composed on this occasion, not only brought him fame, but relieved his poverty. As a reward for his services to the party, he was made one of the Commissioners of the Excise, that is of the domestic taxes, in 1704. Two years later he became Under Secretary of State.

**The Periodical Essays.** — Shortly after this, as we have seen, Addison became a contributor to Steele's new enterprise, the *Tatler*, finding through his friend a fresh and congenial field for his talents, and entering on what was to prove his most brilliant and useful sphere of work. In the succeeding periodical, the *Spectator* (1711), his fine qualities are seen at their best.

The wonderful essays in these periodicals, and in a few others of their kind, performed for the English of the eighteenth century the same service that the players, as Hamlet said, did for the sixteenth; they were the "abstract and brief chronicles of the time." The world read them, and saw itself reflected in the mirror of art. Others had held up mirrors to life, — Chaucer, the poet, to his world of the fourteenth century; Shakespeare, the dramatist, to his world of the sixteenth; and



Magdalen Tower and Quadrangle

now, in the early eighteenth-century world, came the essayists also, holding up in their turn their mirror to the human comedy about them. And that world remains; these little essays, slight and trifling as they seem, not only revealed it to the men of the age that produced them, but they show it to us also, if we read them with sympathetic understanding. It is full of men and women more real to us than many of the great personages of history: the immortal country squire, the amiable and eccentric Sir Roger de Coverley; Will Honeycomb, the elderly man of gallantry; Sir Andrew Freeport, the representative of the rising merchant-class; and poor, aimless, idle Will Wimble. There, too, is Ned Softly, haunting the coffee-houses for a chance to read his verses; Tom Folio, the pedantic bibliographer, the type of those who glorify the outward details of scholarship while incapable of appreciating its spirit; and Addison himself, the *Spectator*, the shy, silent man, who sits by and watches and records all. There are all these and many more painted with such truth and distinctness that, like the pilgrims of Chaucer's worthy company, they remain the living representatives of their time.

**Cato.** — With the production of his ponderous tragedy of *Cato*, in 1713, Addison reached the summit of his success. The play is of little interest to us, but in the eyes of Addison's contemporaries it was the crowning triumph of its author's career.

**Last Years.** — Addison's last years show us what a great social and political eminence a man of high character, sound judgment, and literary ability could then attain. In 1716 he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick, and in the year following he became Secretary of State. Failing health soon compelled him to resign this great office, and he died in 1719.

**Character and Works.** — Almost universally popular and respected in his lifetime, Addison remains one of the most honored of English writers. His poetry, except a few of his hymns, was commonplace and uninspired; his once famous tragedy is little short of a failure; but his best essays have a humanity, a grace, and a sympathetic humor which neither time nor the change in literary fashions has been able to impair. And Addi-



Addison's Walk at Magdalen

son is still honored, not only for what he wrote, but also for what he was. He lived in the midst of literary warfare, of contending factions in politics, and bitter animosities in religion; yet he lived out his prosperous, well-ordered life undisturbed by these things, a man of stainless honor, wise, benevolent, dignified, and serene. He was a shy man, silent, and, it is said, even stiff and awkward among strangers; but when he was at ease with his friends, he is reported to have been "the best company in the world." Even to this day we feel this touch of chill in his dignified reserve, and we should not

dare to claim him for our friend as we did Steele. But, if Addison calls forth our respect rather than our affection, we must not fail to do full justice to the nobility of his character and his life. When we reflect upon the great work he performed for English society, and the way in which he accomplished it, even the slightest disparagement of him seems ungrateful and unimportant: we remember him only as Macaulay truly described him, as "the unsullied statesman; the accomplished scholar; the great satirist who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it; who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue after a long and painful separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism."

### THE NOVEL

Addison and Steele did much to encourage a more simple and informal way of writing: they did much to improve the manners and purify the morals of the time: but, besides all this, they helped men to look at the daily life of the world in which they lived, with a fresh interest and a deeper understanding. Many of the essays in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* were sketches of individual characters, and of social manners in London; and as such were a definite contribution to the development of the novel, which, from the middle of the eighteenth century on, has been one of the most important forms of English literature.

Steele and Addison, in their periodical essays, depicted a type of contemporary life by presenting men and women acting and conversing in the midst of their daily surroundings. In the De Coverley papers, with their fresh and faithful pictures of English town and country

life, with their grasp of character, their amusing or pathetic scenes and incidents, we have all the elements but one of the modern novel. Here, indeed, is a novel held in solution. Had these elements been united by a regularly constructed plot, bringing an added interest, and binding scene to scene, and character to character, by a closer and more inevitable sequence, we should have had a story to set side by side with Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. Here and there in the De Coverley essays are persons and situations almost identical with those which were soon to find a place in the masterpieces of English fiction.

Having advanced thus far, we have reached the very boundaries of a new development in the story-writer's art. But into this region Addison and Steele did not enter. The next great step toward the modern novel was left for a man whom Addison scorned, one of the most brilliant, indomitable, and enigmatical of English writers, Daniel Defoe.

**Daniel Defoe** (1659?-1731), who during early and middle life had been a journalist, a political agent of questionable character, and a man of varied and unusual experience among many classes of men, at the age of sixty began the publication of a series of stories which are the most memorable of his works. The first of these, and the most important, was *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), a story of a poor sailor, cast away on a solitary island in the Caribbean Sea, and a story which promises to delight the world so long as the spirit of adventure and the love of the marvelous survive in the heart of man. *Robinson Crusoe* is but a reporter's "story" in a more expanded and a more purely imaginative form. It has a basis in fact, for it was founded on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, an English



sailor, who, in 1704, was abandoned by his companions on the island of Juan Fernandez. After about four years of solitary exile, Selkirk was rescued, and on his return to England became an object of public interest. But while we can in part explain how it came to be written, the production of such a book as *Robinson Crusoe* remains one of the marvels of literature. Out of the fret and partisanship of an artificial time, when Pope and the rest are treating of the fashions and follies of the town, there comes suddenly the story of a far-away world; the story of a man in an almost primitive relation to nature, shut away from kings, or party squabbles, or political institutions, and set face to face with the first vital problem of the race, the problem of wresting food and clothing and shelter from the earth and the sea by the ingenuity of his mind and the labor of his hands.

The success of *Robinson Crusoe* turned Defoe's energies into a new channel, and he wrote a number of other stories which make his later years the most brilliant literary period of his life. Among these "secondary novels," as Lamb called them, *The Memoirs of a Cavalier*, *The Life of Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, and *The History of Colonel Jack*, are perhaps the best known. These, like *Robinson Crusoe*, are remarkable for their realistic and circumstantial detail, and especially for their human and sympathetic study of the lives of criminals. In no other books of fiction, says Lamb, "is guilt and delinquency made less seductive, or the suffering made more closely to follow the commission, or the penitence more earnest or more bleeding, or the intervening flashes of religious visitation upon the rude and uninstructed soul more meltingly and fearfully painted."

## JONATHAN SWIFT

(1667-1745)

"To Dr. Jonathan Swift, the most agreeable companion, the truest friend, and the greatest genius of his age."

— ADDISON'S dedication of his *Travels in Italy*.

"By far the greatest man of that time, I think, was Jonathan Swift. . . . He saw himself in a world of confusion and falsehood; no eyes were clearer to see it than his."

— THOMAS CARLYLE.

"When a shallow optimism is the most living creed, a man of strong nature becomes a scornful pessimist."

— SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

Jonathan Swift, one of the greatest satirists and most vigorous prose-writers in the history of English literature is to be associated with Defoe as a contributor to the development of realistic fiction. His *Gulliver's Travels*, the work by which he is best known, is, like *Robinson Crusoe*, one of the greatest boys' books in the world. But, unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, it has an interest beyond that of the story itself, and it was written with a purpose far different from that of entertaining and instructing the reader. *Gulliver's Travels* is a powerful and scornful satire on Swift's own time, and, more important still, an outburst of the author's personal feeling which explains in part the most puzzling and most tragic figure in the literary history of the century.

Even from the first Swift's course was determined by his imperious temper and ambitious intellect rather than by the accidents of birth or opportunity. Born in Dublin in 1667 of English parents, he was sent to a school at Kilkenny by his uncle, and afterward (1682) to Trinity College, Dublin. But in both school and college he rebelled against discipline, and neglected

his studies. He was ungrateful for his uncle's charity, ambitious of power, and probably contemptuous of the pedantry and antiquated learning of the universities. During the Irish troubles which succeeded the Revolution of 1688, Swift was forced to take refuge in England. There he became secretary to his mother's kinsman,



Jonathan Swift

Sir William Temple, a retired statesman with literary tastes. Most men in Swift's circumstances would have considered this position a stroke of good fortune, as Temple showed an interest in his young kinsman's career by acts of substantial kindness. But Swift saw a slight in every careless word. His mind was fixed upon what was due to him, rather than on what he

owed to others, and (as he said defiantly in later life) he would not "be treated as a schoolboy." He availed himself of Temple's kindness and good offices, and repaid them with petulance and suspicion.

**Enters the Church.** — Young, brilliant, and ambitious, Swift's natural bent was towards a political career; but circumstances, if not inclination, led him to turn to the Church, and he was ordained in 1694. The Church was one of the great avenues of advancement, but Swift's choice of a profession seems to have been a miserable error. It is true that he performed his clerical duties with scrupulous fidelity; he held frequent services; he identified himself with the Church of England as a political institution, he fought for her privileges, and believed in her as a promoter of sound morals. He gave freely out of his little to the poor, and did many an unostentatious act of kindness; but his nature was earthly and essentially unspiritual, his ruling passion was for worldly power, and as he grew older he came more and more to hate and despise his fellow-men.

**The Tale of a Tub.** — Swift was nearly thirty before he showed the world the strength that was in him. He had written and burned much when, between 1696 and 1698, he wrote two prose works which suddenly revealed to the full the vigor, the ingenuity, the ease, and the robustness of the great satirist. These works, which were not published until 1704, were *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*. In old times a rambling or fictitious story was sometimes called "a tale of a tub." Swift adopts this old expression for his title, explaining that as seamen sometimes throw an empty tub to a whale to divert his attack from the ship, so he throws out this idle story — this "tale of a tub" — to divert the attention of the wits, or skeptics,

from their attack upon the ship of state. The book is a satire upon the corruptions and abuses which have crept into Christianity, and upon the differences and disputes which divide Christendom. Its avowed purpose was to show the superiority of the Church of England, but we feel that the satire has a wider application. These petty religious squabbles (so Swift seems to imply) are but one of the manifestations of the pettiness and inherent depravity of man. At the heart of the book is the truly awful belief that the very springs of life are tainted at their source, that even those feelings which we are accustomed to regard as the glory of man are rooted in selfishness and corruption. Shakespeare, with his deeper and wider vision, could write that there was "a soul of goodness in things evil." Swift in his malevolence would reverse this saying, and thus take away our hope and reverence, and destroy for us the worth and dignity of human life.

**The Battle of the Books.**— In the *Battle of the Books*, Swift took his share in a current controversy on the comparative merits of the literature of the classic and modern times. It tells of a contest between the ancient and the modern books in the King's Library, and is a clever burlesque in prose of the Homeric or epic style. The *Battle of the Books* sneers at the shams of pedantry; the *Tale of a Tub* at shams in religion; Pope's *Rape of the Lock* at the shams of fashion.

**Laracor.** — Shortly after the death of Sir William Temple in 1699, Swift was given a parish at Laracor, a small village about twenty miles from Dublin. His income was small, his congregation often but "half a score," his church "dilapidated," and his parsonage miserably out of repair. It was indeed a dreary and contracted sphere for an ambitious man of genius; and

Swift was not content to settle down at thirty into the humble routine of an obscure country parish. He came often to London, and joined in the political and literary life of the capital. His ability as a pamphleteer was recognized by the Tory leaders who came into power in 1710; and for three years Swift became not only the adviser but really the dictator of Tory policies. Fully aware of his intellectual supremacy, Swift lorded it over great and small. His very looks struck terror. He was contemptuous of the insincerity and shams that he found on all sides, and attacked them with savage irony or brutal directness. Yet to Addison and one or two others with whom he was in close intellectual sympathy, he was "the most agreeable companion, the truest friend."

**Journal to Stella.** — But these years of his triumphs, when he carried his head high among the highest, are also the years in which the gentler and more playful side of his complex nature is revealed in his *Journal to Stella*. This is made up of letters in the form of a journal, written to his former pupil Hester Johnson, whom he had met as a child in the household of Sir William Temple. He called her "Stella," the "star" of his darkness. Scribbled hastily, with no thought beyond the desire to give pleasure to "Stella" and the little group of friends in Ireland, these letters move us, as no other writings of Swift do, to tenderness, awe, and pity. They warn us that even Swift had "two soul-sides," and remind us that when we cannot understand we should be cautious how we judge.

**Political Reverses.** — In 1713, as a reward for his political services, Swift was made Dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin; but in the year following, with the downfall of the Tory Government and the death

of Queen Anne, Swift's political fortunes were ruined. Thereafter his life was one of disappointment and disgust at the injustice and shallowness of the world. He retired to Ireland, and there devoted himself to the cause of the Irish poor; he wrote bitter satires against the petty and corrupt statecraft that made such poverty possible, and against the selfishness of mankind.

**Gulliver's Travels.** — It was during these years that Swift wrote *Gulliver's Travels* (published 1726), a story of one Lemuel Gulliver, ship's surgeon and afterward captain, who makes four remarkable voyages to strange lands. In the first he visits Lilliput, a land inhabited by pigmies; in the second the land of the Brobdingnagians, a race of enormous giants; in the third, Laputa, a land of charlatans and sorcerers; and in the fourth, the land of the Houyhnhnms, a race of horses endowed with reason. Aside from its deeper purpose, *Gulliver's Travels* is first of all a fascinating story. Unbelievable as the strange adventures of Gulliver are, they have that air of careful veracity which places them with the adventures of Robinson Crusoe. But *Gulliver's Travels* is also a great satire — the greatest prose satire in the language. It was Swift's purpose in telling of the life and government of the pigmies and giants to belittle England and the efforts of his fellow-man. "From what you tell me of your country," says the gigantic King of Brobdingnag to Gulliver, "I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the face of the earth." This is the motive passion of the book. It is not merely a satire upon the passing phases of English politics, or upon particular systems, or persons; beyond all this it is a satire on our race, on "that hated and detestable animal called man."

Into it Swift poured that fierce wrath at life and at his brother-men which had tormented him in his hours of darkness. As the book advances, this rage against mankind grows more rabid and more malignant. Man's knowledge is foolishness; his reason, which to Shakespeare seemed the attribute of a god, is held up to contempt; his instincts are proclaimed brutish and vile. We find here the hopeless, faithless doctrine of *The Tale of a Tub* reiterated and reaffirmed after thirty years. But we must remember that while Swift was writing thus savagely against his fellow-man, he was giving generously to the Irish poor out of his limited income, and was winning their affection by his fearless help and sympathy.

**Insanity and Death.** — Swift's life went down in loneliness and darkness. Esther Vanhomrigh, whose love he had slighted, died; Hester Johnson, who had called out the best he had to give of love and tenderness, died also, and one of the strangest and most tragic of the world's love stories was at an end. Once he had written vindictively that he was doomed to die in obscurity "like a poisoned rat in a hole;" now his life drifted on helplessly toward a pitiable and awful close. In loneliness, in failing health, and in what inward and unspeakable anguish we can only conjecture, the shadows of insanity closed in on Swift's clear and splendid intellect; and he sank into a mindless apathy from which he seldom roused. He died in 1745. "An immense genius," writes Thackeray, "an awful downfall and ruin. So great a man he seems to me, that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling."

**Swift and His Time.** — Swift's high place in English literature is assured by his mastery of a clear, vigorous, and straightforward prose style, by his splendid energy



of mind, by his grim satire and irony, his brilliant wit, his keen, masculine intellect, which better than any other understood the hollowness and narrowness of the age. There was actually much in the world, as Swift knew it, to make a man of earnest and melancholy nature despair of his kind, much to provoke cynicism and contempt. Vice, indeed, was less open and defiant than it had been a generation or two earlier, and an awakening sense of decency and order was beginning to make itself felt; but the wild license of the Restoration had left behind it a cynical disbelief in virtue. A mocking spirit, the spirit of denial, infected the moral atmosphere. Men had sneered at enthusiasm; they had worshiped the reason and the intellect, and slighted and despised those feelings which are the true glory of man. They had obscured their higher nature, and they were then tempted to complain that there was no higher nature in man. Yet Swift, while he denounced his time, failed to rise above it. His ambition appears to have been as earthly, as material, and as selfish as that of the men he satirizes. He railed at the fools who contended for the world's trumpery prizes; but few pursued those prizes more eagerly, few were more bitterly disappointed than Swift when they slipped from his grasp. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity when he says of himself: "All my endeavours from a boy to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune, *that I might be used like a lord.*" Swift then is himself an actor in the farce he satirizes; he not only hates his time, but he belongs to it through his life as well as his works. He shares in its vulgarity of aim, he is the strongest expression of its misanthropy and its materialism, and he is the truly awful example of its errors. "We live," said Wordsworth, the poet,

who did so much to restore this lost delight in man and Nature, "we live by admiration, hope, and love." Swift, carrying out to the uttermost the tendency of his age, is a man who tried to live by contempt, by hate, and by despair, and the soul of man cannot live by these things.

**Other Prose-Writers of the Early Eighteenth Century.**—Among the features of the early eighteenth-century literature, we have mentioned the rise of a clear and effective prose style, and an extension of the influence of prose as a literary form. We have studied this prose literature through some of its greatest masters, — Steele, Addison, Swift, Defoe, — but in order to form any true idea of its variety and importance, we must realize that these representative writers lived and worked among a host of others, philosophers, scientists, essayists, theologians, pamphleteers. Nor is this great host a mere crowd of obscure or "minor" authors; it includes some of the most learned, conspicuous, and brilliant men of the time, — such as DR. JOHN ARBUTHNOT (1667–1735), LORD BOLINGBROKE (1678–1751), and BISHOP BERKELEY (1685–1753). Some of these men, indeed, won distinction outside of the strict limits of literature; they were great scholars, or great philosophers rather than simply men of letters; a few are more remarkable for the intellectual stimulus they exerted on the men about them than for the permanent value of their work, but each helped, in his own fashion, to determine the tone and character of his time.

### THE NOVEL OF DOMESTIC LIFE

A more important contribution to pure literature was made by a group of writers, led by SAMUEL RICHARDSON and HENRY FIELDING, who, in the middle of the eight-

eenth century developed the art of story-telling in a new form, — that of the novel of domestic life. While in the hands of Defoe and Swift the novel had come to share in the realistic spirit of the time, it still remained distinctly the novel of adventure; its interest resting mainly, although not entirely, upon the presentation of the more stirring and exceptional side of life.

Between 1740 and 1750, a new form of fiction came into existence, connected with, and yet distinct from, all that had gone before; this was the story of ordinary domestic life and manners. To the dramatist, indeed, this world of every day was not unknown, but in appropriating it to his use the novelist was virtually gaining a new world for his art. Like most great discoveries, the thing seems obvious enough when once it has been done; yet Defoe had thought it necessary to drag his readers into obscure and unsavory places, or to transport them to the ends of the earth, overlooking the artistic possibilities of a world which lay at his feet. In a century and a half this new form of fiction has grown to astonishing proportions, until it is possibly the largest, if not the most important, element in our mental life. The cause of its great and continued popularity is both obvious and fundamental. The vast majority of us are interested first in ourselves, and second in our next-door neighbors. The domestic novel shows us our own familiar life, the life of average, everyday humanity, invested with an added interest and dignity by its translation into art. To see this world of our daily life in the pages of fiction is to see ourselves and our neighbors; to find our gossip and our daily newspapers given a depth and meaning which we are too shallow and too conventional to perceive. The group of writers who first claimed this world for English fiction make an era in the history of art.

**Samuel Richardson.** — In 1740, Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), a London printer, short, plump, ruddy, and prosperous, began this new era by the publication of *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, the story of a “virtuous serving-maid.” Richardson seems a strange leader for a new movement. Up to this time he had done nothing in literature. A shy, demure, highly estimable printer, at the age of fifty, suddenly blossoms into the novelist of sentiment and a master in the analysis of human passion. The fact is partly explained by Richardson’s early and unconscious preparation for his task. In all his novels the story is told in a series of letters. Richardson stumbled into fiction through his marked facility in letter-writing, as Defoe passed into it from journalism by almost imperceptible steps. When only a boy of thirteen, the future author of *Pamela* was entrusted by three young girls of his native town in Derbyshire with the delicate task of composing their love-letters, each confiding in him “unknown to the others;” “all,” he tells, “having a high opinion of my taciturnity.” During his apprenticeship to a London bookseller, he kept up a voluminous correspondence with a gentleman of cultivation who was greatly interested in him. The episode of the love-letters is one of especial significance in its bearing on his later work. We see in it proof of that intimate understanding of women which is one of the distinctive marks of Richardson’s work. The character of Clarissa Harlowe, the heroine of the novel of that name, is admittedly a triumph of portraiture. There was something in Richardson that invited feminine confidences, and the creator of Clarissa Harlowe gathered around him from boyhood to old age an admiring circle of women. “As a bashful and not a forward boy,” he writes, “I was an early favourite with all the

young women of taste and reading in the neighbourhood;" and long after, he was described by Dr. Johnson as one who "took care to be always surrounded by women, who listened to him implicitly and did not venture to contradict his opinions."

**Richardson's Novels.** — Richardson's three novels, *Pamela* (1740), *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), deal respectively with life in the humbler, higher, and aristocratic circles. Yet Richardson's purpose was not so much to picture that life in its various phases as to draw moral lessons from it. On the title-page of *Pamela* he announces that the work is "Published in order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion." This avowedly moral purpose detracts somewhat from the human interest of Richardson's novels. His characters are not altogether real or true. Sir Charles Grandison, for example, is a fine gentleman, composed of all the virtues, but devoid of any redeeming grace of human weakness. Richardson had a profound knowledge of the human heart, but he had not learned to picture weakness as well as strength, and thereby to gain greater naturalness without sacrificing necessarily the moral interest.

**Henry Fielding.** — It was the publication of *Pamela* that turned the genius of Henry Fielding (1707–1754) to the writing of novels, but the spirit which moved the second great novelist of this epoch was very different from that of the moralist. With the mild and diminutive Richardson, sentimentalist, water-drinker, and vegetarian, the boisterous, easy-going, masculine Harry Fielding, with his big frame and high spirits, his keen sense of the ludicrous and his hearty hatred of affectation, could have but little in common. Richardson subsisted on weak tea and feminine adulation. Fielding,

according to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "forgot everything when he was before a venison pasty, or over a flask of champagne." Yet, in spite of his debts, his extravagance, and the dash of the Bohemian in his youth, Fielding was a sound, sterling bit of manhood, of that sturdy, genuine type which we think of as emphatically English. Such a man was quick to detect a strain of false sentiment in *Pamela*, which its author was too serious or too conventional to perceive. So *The Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742), a "virtuous serving-man," supposed to be a brother of Pamela, was begun as a parody. But as the book grew, Fielding's interest carried him far beyond his primary intention, and the result was a great and original contribution to fiction.

Fielding differed from his predecessor in that he was contented to entertain or please the reader, and did not insist upon teaching him. His purpose was to show the life of the time, especially on its ridiculous side, and his work was eminently natural. Tom Jones, the hero of *Tom Jones* (1749), which is Fielding's masterpiece, is one of the most real characters in all fiction. In fact, Fielding's men and women live for us as men and women actually lived in that age — no better, no worse; and though we miss in this realistic novelist many of the subtler and finer touches, we admire his grasp of fact, his manliness, and solidity. He hated cant and hypocrisy, and his large heart was very tender toward womanhood and goodness.

**Other Writers.** — Fielding and Richardson were the most important of these writers of the novel of domestic life in the eighteenth century. Other distinguished novelists of the same period were: LAURENCE STERNE (1713–1768), who wrote *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767);

and GEORGE SMOLLETT (1721–1771), author of *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771). Toward the end of the century another school of novelists arose whose interest centered chiefly in the romance of adventure and in stories of magic and enchantment.

#### IMPORTANT DATES

QUEEN ANNE	1702–1714
ALEXANDER POPE	1688–1744
<i>The Rape of the Lock</i>	1712–1714
<i>The Dunciad</i>	1728
<i>Essay on Man</i>	1732–1734
Battle of Blenheim, won by the Duke of Marlborough	1704
DANIEL DEFOE	1661–1731
His novels, including <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	1719–1728
JONATHAN SWIFT	1667–1745
<i>The Battle of the Books</i> and <i>The Tale of a Tub</i>	1704
<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	1728
RICHARD STEELE founds the <i>Tatler</i>	1709
Contributes to the <i>Tatler</i> , the <i>Spectator</i> , the <i>Guardian</i>	1709–1714
JOSEPH ADDISON contributes to the <i>Tatler</i> , the <i>Spectator</i> , the <i>Guardian</i>	1709–1714
GEORGE I, the first of the Hanover kings	1714–1727
Ministry of Robert Walpole	1721–1742
The development of the novel by RICHARDSON, FIELDING, SMOLLETT, and STERNE.	

## IV. THE MODERN ENGLISH PERIOD

### CHAPTER I

#### THE BEGINNING OF MODERN LITERATURE

(ABOUT 1725-1832)

THE work of the novelists, especially of Richardson and Fielding, is but one of many indications that in the middle of the eighteenth century a great change was coming over the spirit of English life and thought. That one writer devoted an entire book to the story of a serving-maid, and another wrote two novels in which the respective heroes were a serving-man and a foundling, is evidence that a new democratic feeling and a broader human sympathy were spreading over England, and in a definite way were influencing English literature. These and numerous other works, in both prose and verse, mark a wide departure from the literary ideals of Dryden and Pope. They prove that the English mind was freeing itself of conventions and rules; that men were finding new subjects to write about, new interests and enthusiasms to stir them to higher achievements; and that English literature was no longer restricted to the narrow life of Pope's London, but could portray with sympathy and renewed spiritual insight the life of the country and of the middle and lower classes as well as of the upper classes in the city. The



eighteenth century is a period of many and rapid changes. In it we see the birth and gradual development of modern England and of modern English literature, which in its breadth, its love of Nature, its imaginative power, and its faith, is at the furthest remove from the intellectual and cynical, though brilliant, age that preceded it. We pass from the narrowness of Pope's world to a world that has something of the large movement and exhaustless energy characteristic of Elizabethan England, and to a literature which is surpassed only by that of Shakespeare and his great contemporaries.

**New Spiritual Growth.** — The most significant of these changes in English life, the motive force back of many others, is the rise of a new spiritual and moral sensitiveness. Men could not, in the very nature of things, long remain satisfied with mere reason or common sense as the rule of life; nor with a religion that appealed only to the intellect, and was often insincere and cold; nor with a philosophy that ignored or discredited man's inner life and the experiences of the soul. The nation was too inherently emotional and religious for such a mood to endure. The higher side of man's nature began to assert itself, and those human hopes and longings which the "freezing reason" cannot satisfy began to stir and claim their due. It was inevitable that men should arise who would see through the shallowness and hardness of that life and of the system of thought that sustained it, and who, in the fuller power of a more perfect manhood, would throw a new spiritual energy and depth of meaning into politics, religion, philosophy, and poetry.

**The Rise of Methodism.** — This growth of a new enthusiasm and faith is seen in a great wave of religious feeling that is associated with the rise of *Methodism*.

Early in the century, the Church of England shared in the prevailing coldness and unspirituality; the filling of its offices was tainted by political intrigue, and while its clergy were idle and often shamefully lax in manners and morals, their parishioners, too, were often indifferent. But with this condition of affairs many men came to be dissatisfied, especially JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY and GEORGE WHITEFIELD. These men felt that religion should be a more real and personal experience, and, by appealing to man's conscience and heart rather than to his reason, should be a sincere motive in life. Stirred by their own intense convictions, they went among the masses and preached in the open air to crowds of mechanics and farmers. Their marvelous eloquence and sincerity struck deep into the souls of thousands. The preaching of Whitefield made the tears trickle down the grimy faces of the Bristol colliers. A ship-builder in the colonies, who once heard him preach, said, "Every Sunday that I go to my parish church, I can build a ship from stem to stern under the sermon; but were it to save my soul, under Mr. Whitefield I could not lay a single plank." This new religious sincerity spread throughout England, and from the lower classes to society at large.

**Deeper Sympathy with Man.** — With this revival of a more spiritual life in the midst of a jovial, unbelieving, and often coarse and brutal society, there came an increasing sense of human brotherhood and of the inherent dignity of manhood. English history contains few things more truly beautiful than the story of this awakening tenderness and compassion. The novel sense of pity became wide and heartfelt enough to embrace not men only, but all wantonly hurt and suffering creatures. Bull-baiting gradually fell into disfavor,

and the cruel sport known as bull-running was suppressed (1788). Individuals and committees examined the condition of the jails and tried to relieve the unspeakable sufferings of the captives. Statesmen and journalists labored for the abolition of slavery. The criminal was no longer dragged through crowded London streets to be hanged at Tyburn, a holiday spectacle to jeering or admiring throngs; the rigors of the code which condemned wretches to death for a trifling theft were gradually softened. So, in these and countless other ways, the social revulsion against brutality and violence which marked the rise of a new England unmistakably declared itself.

**Walpole and Pitt.** — In the spirit of politics, too, we note a great change. This is evident in the striking contrast between the administration of ROBERT WALPOLE (1721–1742) and that of WILLIAM PITT (1757–1761). During the former, in an interval of profound peace, England had devoted herself to the development of trade and the business of money-making: the merchant gained in social position, and wealth rapidly increased. Walpole, the guiding spirit of this prosperous period, was the embodiment of its prosaic and mercantile character. Shrewd and narrow-minded, he had great business ability, but was incapable of approaching life from its ideal or imaginative side. Openly corrupt in his political methods, he declared that men would come out of their rhapsodies about patriotism, and grow wiser. Such traits are characteristic of early eighteenth-century England. But, as we advance toward the middle of the century, those higher impulses which were manifesting themselves in so many ways were at work in politics also. By 1757, William Pitt, the animating spirit of the so-called Patriot party, was virtually at

the head of the government affairs. A great historian has observed that Pitt did a work for politics similar to that which John Wesley was, at the same time, accomplishing for religion. He believed in his countrymen, and England responded to his trust. Instead of debauching public morals by bribery, he made his passionate appeal to patriotism.

**The Expansion of England.**— Under Pitt's enthusiasm and devotion, the interests of England, which before had seemingly been narrowed to insular limits, expanded before men's eyes, and about the middle of the century the nation entered upon that great duel with the rival power of France which was to raise her from an island monarchy to a world empire. In 1757 Robert Clive won a great victory at Plassey, and laid the foundation of England's supremacy in India. In 1759 Wolfe captured Quebec, and established her dominion in America. Two worlds, the rich civilization of the ancient East, and the vast and undeveloped resources of the new West, were almost at the same instant within England's grasp. "We are forced," said Horace Walpole, "to ask every morning what victory there is, for fear of missing one." Men's hearts were warm with a glow of patriotic pride and a sense of England's mighty destiny. Meanwhile, exploration as well as foreign war was directing the thoughts of Englishmen to distant and almost unknown lands. In 1770 Captain Cook explored the east coast of Australia, and took possession of it in the name of Great Britain. Eighteen years later the first permanent English settlement was made on the site of the present city of Sydney, and the British colonial empire was definitely extended to these far-off waters of the Pacific. The story of Cook's voyages, like those of the explorers of Elizabeth's time, brought home a

new world to the imagination, and introduced into literature a more cosmopolitan spirit and a sense of the wonder and variety of the world's life.

**Industrial and Social Changes.** — While patriotism and imagination were thus quickened by the great part that England began to play in the world-wide drama of human destiny, at home a silent revolution was transforming the aspect of life and the very structure of society. From the building of the first canal by James Brindley in 1761, new facilities for transportation and new methods of manufacture followed quickly on each other, until the agricultural England of old times became the industrial England of the nineteenth century, and the "workshop of the world." Following hard on these changes are those problems of labor and capital which confront our modern world.

**The Growth of Democracy and the Age of Revolution.** — And side by side with all these new things was the beginning of one of the greatest historic movements since the Renaissance, the rise of modern democracy. With the conviction of human brotherhood, with the passionate sense of the worth and dignity of individual manhood, come the blood and violence of those social upheavals which usher in our modern world. Men are possessed with a fever for the "rights of man;" they dream of a wholesale reorganization of society, and the coming of an idyllic Golden Age; they struggle to convert the gospel of a "return to Nature" advocated by the great French writer, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, into a practical reality. In America, a Republic is established on the foundations of human freedom and equality; in feudal France, after generations of dumb misery, the people lift their bowed backs from labor, and, in the French Revolution, and particularly during the Reign

of Terror, wreak on their rulers the accumulated vengeance of centuries. The finest spirits of England, though horrified at the bloody excesses in France, are thrilled and exalted by this flood of enthusiasm for the cause of man; the word "liberty" sounds as a talisman in men's ears, and the spirit of revolution for a time controls and inspires many of the best productions of literature.

#### LITERATURE AFTER THE DEATH OF POPE

Modern England, thus beginning to take shape even during the lifetime of Pope and Walpole, had a literature of its own; but the older literary methods and ideals by no means came to an end with the beginning of the new. Accordingly, after the rise of this new literature, or from about 1725, we find the literature of England flowing, as it were, in two separate streams; the one, marked by a mode or fashion of writing which began definitely with Dryden, may be traced from Dryden on through Pope, its most perfect representative, through Samuel Johnson, until its dissipation in the time of Wordsworth; the other, springing from a different source and inspired by a different spirit, flows with gathered force and volume, and with deepening channel, almost to our own time. Many of the features which had characterized the Restoration literature in the reign of Queen Anne were prolonged far into the century, and some writers modeled their style on Pope and Addison until toward the century's close. In poetry many works continued to be written in which the didactic element prevailed, and in prose we have the ponderous work of Samuel Johnson, which continues the reign of common sense in the realm of literature.

## SAMUEL JOHNSON

(1709-1784)

"Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness of manner, but no man has a better heart; he has nothing of the bear but his skin."

— GOLDSMITH.

"There is no arguing with Johnson; for, when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it."

— GOLDSMITH.

For forty years after the death of Pope, the greatest personal force in English literature and criticism, and the dominant power in the literary circles of London, was Dr. Samuel Johnson. Because of his commanding position he was dubbed by Smollett, "The Great Cham of Literature;" and on account of his moral essays and his English dictionary, others have called him "The Great Moralist" and "The Great Lexicographer." To-day, however, Johnson the man is more interesting than Johnson the author. He survives for us as he was in what is perhaps the most famous of all biographies, the *Life of Johnson*, by JAMES BOSWELL. In that book he lives again, as a character in a novel, and we get to love him for his sturdy good sense and manliness, his touching and almost ingenuous piety, and even for his dominating manner and grim humor.

**His Life.** — Samuel Johnson was born in the quiet old cathedral town of Lichfield in 1709. His father was a bookseller, who had his shop opposite St. Mary's Church. Samuel went to various schools in Lichfield, and afterward to Stourbridge in Worcestershire. As a boy he was very indolent, but he had an unusual memory and a naturally inquisitive mind. At school he got a good grounding in Latin, because, as he later said, "My master whipped me very well.



**Samuel Johnson**  
**From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds**





Without that, sir, I should have done nothing." During two years spent at home, before he went to college, he read widely in the classics, browsing in his father's book-shop, and storing up much of the learning for which he was afterwards famous. In 1728 he went to Pembroke College, Oxford. There we have a picture of him lounging at the college gate, interesting groups of students by his talk, as he was later to interest literary London. His life at college was a constant struggle with poverty. He was so poor that he was out at shoes, but so sturdily independent that he threw away a new pair left at his door in charity. Even thus early Johnson was subject to moods of bitter melancholy, but he determined "to fight his way by his literature and wit." On account of his poverty, he was unable to remain at college longer than three years. In 1736 he set up a small school at Lichfield, but the school failed. Then, in 1737, Johnson and Garrick went up to London together, having fourpence between them; and Johnson began his memorable career in the great metropolis.

**London.** — Gradually Johnson rose from the position of an obscure writer for the *Gentleman's Magazine* to that of the literary dictator of London, when, as one of his friends tells us, he was "considered as a kind of public oracle, whom everybody thought they had a right to visit and consult." His first recognition came with the publication of his satire of *London* in 1738, a poem that attracted the favorable notice of Pope. In 1750 Johnson founded a periodical called *The Rambler*, somewhat on the model of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, and for two years conducted it almost single-handed. In it were printed the moral essays, which, in their dignified thought and ponderous, many-syllabled style, are Johnson's most characteristic work. In 1755 he published

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his *English Dictionary*, the first important dictionary of the language; in 1759, his story of *Rasselas*; and from 1779 to 1781, a series of biographical and critical papers, *The Lives of the Poets*, the best of his works.

Johnson early gained a reputation in London for his solid learning and his good talk. Although at first he was poor and unknown, he came to be the friend and companion of some of the best minds of the day. He had an instinct for sociability. Upon first coming to London, he says, he "dined very well for eightpence, with very good company, at the Pine Apple in New Street." Afterwards he was the leading spirit and chief oracle in the immortal group of wits and thinkers who met at the Turk's Head tavern, and called themselves the Literary Club. Among them were Goldsmith, the poet; Garrick, the actor, called by Johnson, "the first man in the world for sprightly conversation;" Gibbon, the historian; Burke, statesman and orator; Sir Joshua Reynolds, painter, and president of the Royal Academy; and finally, the brilliant young aristocrat, Topham Beauclerk. Johnson was a man who had "no passion for clean linen;" he was uncouth in manner; his face was scarred by disease, and his large, ungainly person was subject to sudden starts and odd gesticulations. But he commanded the respect of these men, and enjoyed their friendship. For the sake of a social evening and the pleasure of argument, he founded several clubs. He once declared "that a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity." Seated at the head of the table, he loved to dogmatize, to contradict and retort; he knew the pleasure of high talk, and delighted in the dust and smoke of the conflict. As Ben Jonson, in Shakespeare's day, quaffed sack at The Mermaid, so Dr. Johnson drank endless cups of tea or a little wine at

The Cheshire Cheese or The Mitre. He "loved to fold his legs and have out his talk." In 1762 he was granted a pension of three hundred pounds by the King, which enabled him even more freely to take his ease at his inn.

But we must not think of Johnson as an idler. Although constitutionally indolent, he had won by his own solid parts a chief place in the world of letters.



Coffee-room in Cheshire Cheese Inn

As we have seen, he was capable of sustained intellectual effort. He once wrote forty-eight octavo pages (in his *Life of Savage*) at one sitting; although, as he says, he sat up all night. Moreover, Johnson was a thoroughly conscientious man, and his dominating manner was but a mask to a tenderness almost womanly, and to a genuinely humane and kindly nature. Full of years and honors, he died in 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

**As Prose-Writer.** — While Johnson wrote some strong, quotable verse, he was preëminently a prose-writer in an age of prose. His essays in the *Rambler*, the *Idler*, and other periodicals are distinguished by their moral teachings rather than by their literary charm, and were influential in popularizing a peculiarly heavy and learned style, which has since been dubbed *Johnsonese*. Probably Johnson's most lasting contribution to literature, though by no means free from characteristic limitations, is his *Lives of the Poets*. In that work we find Johnson's mature critical opinions and an example of his later and more simple style. As a critic he was blinded oftentimes by prejudice and by the limitations of his age. He would banish from poetry whatever disagrees with common sense, and he discredits the higher emotional and imaginative qualities that are poetry's chief glory. In fact, Johnson was the last great champion of the old order. The reign of common sense was coming to a close. Even as he was writing, new agitations were already rife. Absolute as was his literary dictatorship, his throne was reared on the verge of that revolution which begins the modern period of our literary history. The industrial and social England, the rise of which we have suggested, was taking shape between Johnson's arrival in London in 1737 and his death in 1784; new feelings utterly opposed to many of his traditions and prejudices, and alien to his understanding and habits of thought, were quickening into life around him. While he held steadily to the ancient ways, those changes in literary standards had already begun which have led to the reversal of nearly every important dictum uttered by this great literary law-giver in matters of criticism.

And yet, though the influence of Johnson the critic and moralist has waned, that of Johnson the man is

still vital and real. The Johnson of Boswell bids fair to be immortal. In the words of Macaulay, "The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the *anfractuosities* of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man."

#### THE NEW SPIRIT IN LITERATURE

The changing spirit of England expressed itself through literature as it did through religion, politics, and social life. This new spirit in literature, which from about the first quarter of the century became increasingly apparent, was at once a result of those wide-spread changes which characterize the time, and also one of those forces which altered men's outlook on life and helped to push England on a new path. Before speaking of some of the authors prominent in this movement, it will be helpful to gain some idea of its chief characteristics.

*I. The Return to Nature.* — The new literature concerns itself distinctively with the country, as the old literature did with the town. Pope, Addison, and Swift, had given London the gossip of the coffee-houses, the miseries and malignities of Grub Street, the gay, petty world of fashion, or the current politics and philosophy. The new poetry led men's thoughts away from these things into the sunshine and the open fields; it trans-

ported the inveterate Londoner into a world which he had half forgotten, or had never really known, a world of plow-land and sheepfold, of mountain, lake, and glen; a world that, beside the eagerness and noise of the city, seemed quiet, self-sufficient, and remote. This increasing fondness for country subjects is usually spoken of as "the return to Nature."

*II. The New Sympathy with Man.*— This new literature was distinguished by a deeper and a more comprehensive love of man. That deep feeling, which, as the eighteenth century advanced, prompted men to turn from the artificial life of society to the world of Nature, was closely associated with a sympathetic interest in the lives of the country-folk and the poor. The representative writers of Queen Anne's time had despised and satirized humanity. We have seen Pope's low estimate of it, his malice towards men, his ingrained disbelief in women; we have seen Swift's fierce and cynical misanthropy. In a long succession of writers from James Thomson to Wordsworth, we observe that sympathy for human misery and misfortune, that ever deepening admiration for human nature, that love of liberty, and that belief in human brotherhood, which we have already seen in the social development of this period.

*III. Children and Home Life.* — This deeper humanity, that was making literature more gentle and compassionate, also declared itself in a sympathy with children and with the home. In the writings of the great representatives of the Classical School childhood has no place. But as poets came to view life with a greater tenderness and a deeper understanding, their hearts were touched by the helplessness and loving dependence of little children, and they felt that childhood had in it something wonderful and sacred. This

feeling appeared in poems of childhood, and in stories written for children as well as about them. The quiet and secluded life of the home also found its interpreters, as in Gray, Cowper, Burns, and Wordsworth. Nor was this sympathy restricted to humanity or to the world of inanimate Nature; it stooped to the creatures below man, to the hare, the field-mouse, the waterfowl, even to the very worm beneath our feet. This feeling is particularly evident in the poetry of Cowper and of Burns.

*IV. Return to the Poetic Manner of the Elizabethans.* — We notice in this new poetry an increasing tendency to revert both to the manner and the spirit of the great English poets who preceded Dryden and Pope. The supremacy of the heroic verse, or ten-syllabled couplet, which those writers had used almost exclusively, was disputed, and here and there poets began to use some of the more varied and musical verse-forms of Spenser and Milton. People no doubt began to tire of the monotonous rise and fall of Pope's favorite measure — "the rocking-horse measure," as Lowell has aptly dubbed it. The heroic couplet had been admirably adapted in its clear, terse expression of epigrammatic thought to the needs of Dryden and of Pope. But as the range of thought that found expression in poetry became wider, and as poets developed a more subtle appreciation of the music of words, they felt the need of new instruments, and so returned to the older verse-forms, especially to blank verse and the Spenserian stanza.

*V. A New World of the Imagination.* — With these new tendencies we must associate a longing to escape from the world of commonplace fact and everyday experiences, into some strange, untried region of the imagination, remote from the prosaic and the familiar.



The supremacy of "common sense" was passing; a love of strong or strange emotions began to manifest itself, and men found pleasure in a poetry which inspired feelings of wonder, awe, horror, melancholy, or mysterious fear. Men's great desire was to get out of doors, to get away from the town, to experience new sensations, to find a wider area for feeling and imagination. Just as men realized there was a world outside of London, they realized that there was a world outside of England, and the same impulse which drove the poets from Grub Street to the fields drove them to seek for new subjects in far-off and unfamiliar lands, or in remote and less artificial times. Especially important was the collecting or imitating of the ballads of the common people, which had long been disregarded as outside the bounds of literature. To turn away from poetry of a more academic and literary order, and to come back to these ballads, filled as they were with primitive passions, with primitive and superstitious fears, was, in a very real sense, to come back to Nature. And, moved by this desire to escape from the commonplace, men entered the enchanted ground of chivalry and romance. It was but natural that writers in search of "beauty with strangeness," of something picturesque, heroic, and unfamiliar, should find in the Middle Ages something particularly suited to their needs. It was natural that in their recoil from a time which seemed to them flippant, skeptical, and prosaic, men should take shelter in those ages of romance and knightly heroism, of wonder and of faith. So, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, there was a growing interest in everything belonging to this special period of the past: in its costume, its architecture, its manners, its literature. This delight in the Middle Ages, which is com-

monly called the *Medieval Revival*, found its greatest interpreter in Sir Walter Scott.

These varied and comprehensive changes were not brought about by any one man, nor were they effected in a single generation. To appreciate the gradual transition from the old literature to the new, from the Age of Dryden and of Pope to the Age of Wordsworth and of Shelley, we must now turn to some of the writers who led the way into the new land.

**Allan Ramsay and James Thomson.** — One fact impresses us at the outset: the important part taken by Scottish men of letters in this reaction from the restrictions of the Classical School. The return of poetry to Nature definitely begins with ALLAN RAMSAY and JAMES THOMSON, both of them children of the Scottish Lowlands. Ramsay, born in 1686, was familiar in his boyhood with the picturesque and mountainous scenery of Lanarkshire. When he was about fifteen he was sent to Edinburgh, where he became a prosperous and popular wig-maker and bookseller. Ramsay was a man of cheerful temper, and as he was interested in books and fond of a jest, his shop became a favorite place of literary and social resort. He had a liking for the old popular lyrical poetry, and he published two collections of early Scottish songs and poems, which in part prepared the way for Robert Burns. Ramsay's best work is *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), a pastoral play which pictures successfully the homely shepherd life of the Scotch Lowlands. Ramsay has been called the "prince of the homely pastoral drama," because his pictures are true, and his feeling for beauty, simplicity, and tenderness is genuine. Instead of the classic Damon and Daphne, of Strephon promising to sacrifice a milk-white bull to Phoebus on the banks of

the Thames, we have in *The Gentle Shepherd* plain Patie and Roger and a simple picture of domestic life:

“At e’en when he comes weary frae the hill,  
I’ll hae a’ things made ready to his will.  
In Winter, when he toils thro’ wind and rain,  
A bleezing ingle, and a clean hearth-stane;  
And soon as he flings by his plaid and staff,  
The seething pat’s be ready to take aff;  
Clean hag-a-bag I’ll spread upon his board,  
And serve him wi’ the best we can afford.”

In such lines as these we feel that poetry has already found a new source of beauty and of power; that it has got back to something primary and fundamental.

**James Thomson**, whose name we have associated with Ramsay’s as a pioneer of the new poetry, was a man of far greater influence, and one in whom the tendencies of the new literature were much more distinctly manifest. He was born in 1700, the year of Dryden’s death, in the beautiful valley of the Tweed in the Scotch Lowlands. A year later his father removed to a retired spot on the slopes of the Cheviot Hills. Here, in the most picturesque and romantic surroundings, the future poet of Nature passed his boyhood. His fondness for poetry showed itself early; and in 1725 he left the University of Edinburgh without taking his degree, and came to London. He published his great work, *The Seasons*, in 1730, a series of four poems on *Winter*, *Summer*, *Spring*, and *Autumn*. *The Seasons* begins a new era in the Nature poetry of England, and possibly of modern Europe. The great theme of the book is Nature herself, seen under the changing aspect of the four seasons. Thomson’s poetry was a protest against the artificial life of the town, where

“Joyless Inhumanity pervades  
And petrifies the heart.”

Thomson was moved also by the sufferings of prisoners, and he commended the labors of the "generous band,"

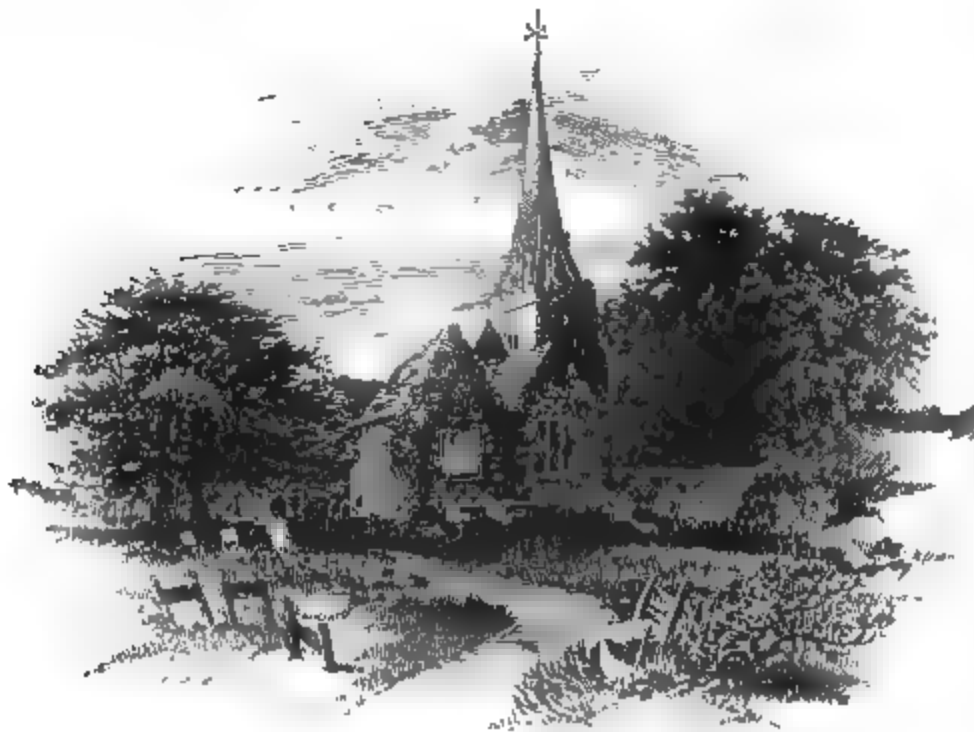
"Who, touched with human woe, redressive searched  
Into the horrors of the gloomy jail."

**Collins and Gray.** — From the time of the publication of *The Seasons* we find a growing delight in Nature and a further departure from the poetic style and spirit of Pope. The poets of this time look back to the classic, artificial school of Pope, and point forward to the more truly poetic school of Wordsworth, Scott, and Coleridge. As we proceed in the century, the romantic spirit, the element of "beauty with strangeness," becomes stronger and more general. Towards the middle of the century this development is especially marked in the delicately musical *Odes* of WILLIAM COLLINS (1746), and in the immortal *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* of THOMAS GRAY (1751). The poetry of both Collins and Gray is remarkable for lyrical melody, exquisite finish of workmanship, and sentiment. Collins had the finer and rarer lyrical gift, and the more purely imaginative mind. His passionate fondness for music is felt as a guiding instinct in his poetry; and his imagination carries us to strange lands, or paints vivid pictures of things abstract and unsubstantial. We see "Winter, yelling through the troublous air;" and "the haggard eye" and "hurried step" of Fear. In the *Persian Eclogues*, Collins turns to the Orient for poetic subjects. Although these eclogues lack the passionate enthusiasm of some of the Elizabethans for Oriental coloring, and much of the glamour of the land of pearls, silks, spices, and gold, they give us several real pictures of the east. In one of them a camel-driver, carrying his cruse of water and his scantily-filled srip, shading his eyes from the sun as he drives the caravan over the sandy plain,

regrets that he has left the quiet valleys and "the flowery mountain's side" to seek gain across the "dreary deserts;" and we are made to feel that for poetic sentiment the deserts of the east are less arid than the glades of Pope's Windsor Forest. Collins was attracted by mystery and splendor. Dr. Johnson says, he "delighted to roam through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian gardens." In his *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, Collins shows his feeling for folk-lore and fairy-lore, and for the gloom and mystery of loch and mountain. In these new subjects, and in the "softly austere and simply tender gravity" found in some of the *Odes*, we see that poetry has advanced a long way indeed from the ideals of the so-called Classical School.

**Gray.** — Gray likewise turned from the world of the prosaic. He explored old myths, or sought some quiet scene, congenial to contemplation. He was a scholar and a close observer of Nature, who opened new fields of romance to Englishmen by his study of Icelandic lays and Welsh history. But his best poems, *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* and *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, are noted for their even tone of quiet meditation, and their gentle moralizing on human life, rather than for any foreign material or any pure description of Nature. Yet, in the *Elegy* we are made to feel, as a pervading atmosphere entirely appropriate to the meditative mood of the poet, the quiet of evening and the charm of English landscape. Gray shows also a strong sympathy with the poor and lowly, with those "to Fortune and to Fame unknown." He appreciates their homely virtues, their silent heroism, and he realizes that too often their opportunities are but few.

**The New Humanity: Goldsmith, Cowper, and Crabbe.** — While these poets were introducing a new music in eighteenth-century poetry, and were pointing out the beauties of Nature and of the life and literature of foreign lands, others were giving voice more particularly to the spirit of a widening humanity.



Stoke Pogis Churchyard, the Scene of Gray's "Elegy."

**OLIVER GOLDSMITH** (1728-1774), the friend and companion of Dr. Johnson, was connected by the style and outward form of many of his works with the literature of the older school of Pope and Addison. But protesting against the luxury of the careless rich, he is full of the new sympathy with the poor and the unfortunate. Thus in spirit, though not in form, he belongs with the poets of the new age. Goldsmith was born in an Irish village. He was an ugly, amiable boy, idle, blundering, and careless, but generous and loving, with a simple

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goodness of nature which no hard experiences were able to soil or impair. For a time he studied medicine at Edinburgh; then, after some aimless wanderings on the Continent, he arrived in London in 1756, with no prospects and with only a few half-pence in his pocket. Here he had to fight for a bare living. After various disappointments and failures, he became a hack-writer for the booksellers. When he was in sore need, Dr. Johnson became his helper and friend. He was taken into the exclusive literary circle, and was one of the original members of the Literary Club, to which Johnson, Reynolds, and Burke also belonged. But Goldsmith was always in debt, and a great part of his writing was done to order under the pressure of many difficulties. From time to time he turned from his drudgery to add a classic to literature — *The Traveller* (1764), his idyllic story the *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his masterpiece of comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). These works brought him fame, but he was continually worried by money difficulties, and toward the last the strain told even on his easy-going and buoyant nature. He died in London in 1774, owing two thousand pounds, but as he lay dying, the staircase leading to his room was filled with poor outcasts whom he had befriended.

The spirit of humanity thus exemplified in Goldsmith's life is perhaps the chief distinction of his works. In his prose as in his poetry there is a depth of sympathy, and a certain cosmopolitan breadth of view unusual in his time. In the two comedies, *The Good-Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, Goldsmith led a reaction against a less natural and more sentimental school of comedy, and helped to make a new era in the history of the English drama. But it is in *The Vicar of Wake-*

*field* that we find Goldsmith's most distinctive qualities. This evidently was written not for the world, but for himself. It is a prose idyl picturing the family life of a country vicar, Dr. Primrose, who, with unacclaimed heroism, fulfils the duties of a humble station, and in the midst of injustice, poverty, and disgrace keeps his faith in man and God. The book is the picture of an ideal man, as "ideal as Hector and not less immortal." In Goldsmith's own words, the hero of the piece "unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth; he is a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family."

Goldsmith, the poet, is separated from Pope and his fellows by a wide spiritual gulf. In *The Traveller* he takes us beyond the narrow streets of London, and sets us in the midst of a broad expanse of Nature; he looks down on the nations from the mountain-peak, and bids us realize that the inequalities in the lot of man are less great than we suppose. In *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith pictures the little contracted world of the village, untroubled with the fever of prosperity, and he regrets the passing of its simple, wholesome life before "trade's unfeeling train." The poem is eloquent of Goldsmith's fine, unworldly nature, and is a deliberate protest against the oppression of the poor, against luxury and the evils that follow in its train.

WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800), a timid recluse who spent more than half his life in the seclusion of an English village, was also a poet of Nature and of the new humanity. Born in 1731, he early entered upon the course of sorrow which darkened his life. At the age of six, his mother, in whom all his child-life centered, died, and he was left practically alone. At ten he went to the great school of Westminster, and at eighteen began



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the study of law. But for this Cowper had little aptitude. He led an idle, aimless life, occasionally subject to fits of melancholy and depression. In 1763 he was offered a government position through the influence of his uncle, but in preparing for the necessary examination before the House of Lords, Cowper's overwrought mind gave way, and he seemed a hopeless and beaten man. After two years in an asylum for the insane, however, he partially recovered, and went to live with a family named Unwin, first at Huntingdon, a quiet old town on the river Ouse, and afterward at Olney, a village inseparably associated with his memory. In the quiet and security of this life, Cowper became the poet of the home. In *The Task* (1785), the greatest of his longer poems, he pictured the group about the fire on a winter's night; the woodsman, crossing the snow to his day's work, his lean cur at his heels, or frolicking in the powdery drift; the wagoner breasting the driving storm beside his reeking team; the quiet return of evening; the still waters of the Ouse; the square church-tower; the clipt hedgerows, and all the ordered beauty and repose of the English landscape. Side by side with these idyls of an English village are the poet's thoughts on life in its wider aspects. Recluse as he was, he was a leader, a precursor of Wordsworth, a man who helped to bring in the ideals of our modern world. He was the poet of an awakened religious fervor, of the new love of humanity and of human freedom, the poet of the simple natural life, who declared that

"God made the country, and man made the town."

GEORGE CRABBE (1754-1832), while continuing the poetry of natural description, brought the realism of the earlier part of the century to the painting of the

homely and often repulsive life of the country poor. In his poem, *The Village* (1783), he scorns the artificial pastoral of the older school, and declares

"I paint the cot  
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not."

Born and brought up among the poor, Crabbe knew the scenes he pictured, and was thus able to give them a directness and vividness which did much to extend men's sympathy with the lowly and the downtrodden.

In these and other poets we hear the voice of the new democracy, and an appeal to a broader and more real human brotherhood.

**Edmund Burke (1729-1797).** In marked contrast to the quiet, contemplative life of Cowper was the public career of Edmund Burke, the great political thinker and statesman, who, with impassioned eloquence, strove to impress upon England and Europe the true meaning of liberty. An Irishman, born in Dublin in 1729, Burke entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of fourteen, and after taking a degree went to London to study the law. There he began his career as an author with the publication of *An Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756). He became a friend of Dr. Johnson, and one of the founders of the Literary Club. But Burke's interests were turning more and more from literature to politics. In 1765 he entered the House of Commons, and won immediate distinction by a speech on the repeal of the Stamp Act. The difficulties with the American Colonies, one of the gravest questions confronting the government, called forth three of Burke's best speeches, and placed him with the greatest supporters of the Colonists. Indeed, an English statesman and critic has said that these

speeches of Burke's on American affairs "are almost the one monument of the struggle on which a lover of English greatness can look with pride." In his *Speech on Conciliation with America*, Burke brushes away the legal question of the right of England to tax the Colonies, and rests the argument on the broader ground of expediency and common sense. "The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy."

Burke has been called the "interpreter of English liberty." He was by nature a conservative, with a love for what he called "a well-regulated liberty." Thus, when the French Revolution broke out, with its violence, its bloodshed, its defiance of all authority, Burke, shocked and alarmed, threw the full force of his powers into his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) — a book which remains one of the literary monuments of the time. To him the Revolution seemed to be only destructive. He looked back upon the cherished ideals and institutions of historic Europe, and felt that their very existence was hanging in the balance. In the insults offered to the beautiful and unhappy Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, he saw the signal of the death of chivalry. "The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever." In the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796–1797), Burke declaimed against any truce with France, which he called a "pretended republic of murderers, robbers, and atheists." He solemnly declared that his words, though they might have the weakness, had at least the sincerity, of a dying declaration. He died soon after, at Beaconsfield, in 1797.

The enduring fiber in Burke's writings lies in his being not merely the orator, the poet, the master of style, but preëminently the thinker, able to rise above purely contemporary interests. His works are rich in a political wisdom, in maxims and observations that reach far beyond the particular conditions which called them forth. And his words are those of a man profoundly in earnest, who rises above mere questions of party, and in his concern for the welfare of mankind forgets all interests of self. In this way, Burke too is a champion of the new humanity.

**Summary.** — When we classify and arrange all these stupendous changes in the external conditions of men's lives, and in man's mental and spiritual estimate of life's meaning and purpose, the great and peculiar place of the eighteenth century in history begins to take shape in our minds. The two great historic movements of the century define themselves as:

1. The expansion of England into a world power.
2. The rise of democracy, with all those industrial and social changes which accompany and forward it.

When we look at this period, not from one aspect, but from every side, we see that its beginning dates from the last years of the administration of Walpole, or from about 1730 to 1740. To that decade we have referred the rise or growth of a new spirit in religion, politics, and literature. In 1756 England enters upon her long struggle with France for the prize of half the world. Between 1755 and 1765 we find those improvements in transportation and manufactures which begin the "industrial revolution." From about this time the advance toward democracy becomes more rapid and apparent. We enter the era of a bold opposition to authority. Reporters are admitted to the House of

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Commons, and the press gains enormously in power. The American and French Revolutions stir the very foundations of society, and there is an outburst in literature of the revolutionary spirit. Finally, we may group many of these changes about two centers: (a) that longing for a more simple and more natural life, and that revolt against accepted standards, which accompanied a rebirth of the more religious and ideal elements of society; (b) that feeling of compassion for suffering, that sense of the worth of the individual, which we associate with the growth of democracy.

### ROBERT BURNS

(1759-1796)

In the work of Robert Burns we find English poetry making a definite and complete break with the older traditions of the eighteenth century. A great and original genius, sprung from the soil, unhampered by the learning of the schools, Burns wrote from the inner power of the soul, and introduced into English poetry a new and unmistakably sincere note of passion. We have seen how the new spirit of England found expression in the poetry of Thomson, Gray, Collins, Goldsmith, and Cowper, who in varying degrees showed a fresh love of Nature, or a new sense of brotherhood, or a wistful, half-melancholy sentiment for the romance of the past. But none of these writers had entirely escaped from the conventionalities of the older school. Their poetry had been graceful, sympathetic, imaginative, and often musical, but it had not been impassioned. None of them had had that strong grip on life, that profound sense of man's struggles, hopes, and joys, which is the

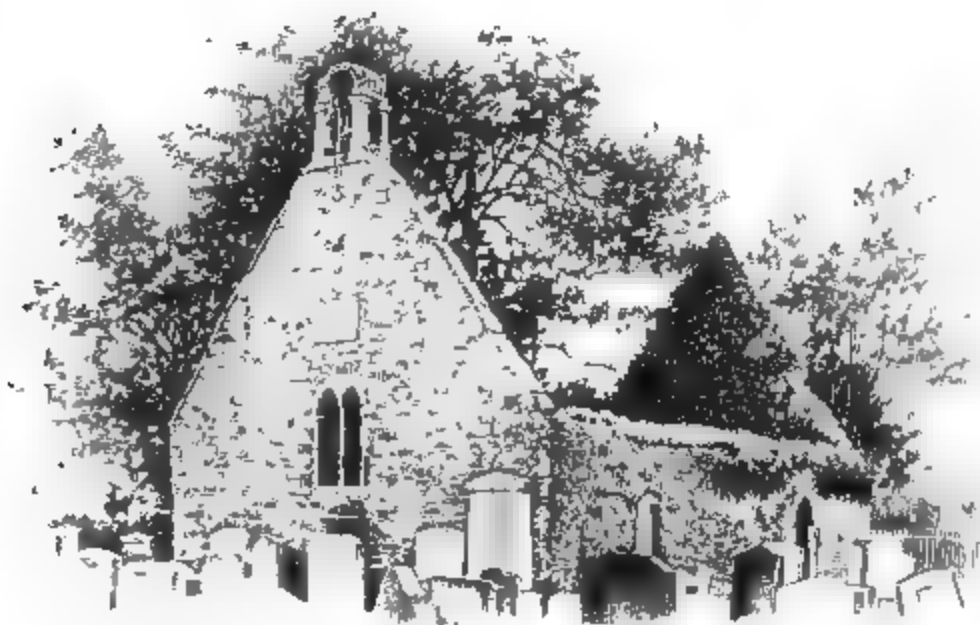
poet's greatest power, and which comes only to genius working upon the elemental facts of life at first hand. The Scotch plowman, Robert Burns, by his birthright and his heritage of poverty and labor, not only knew but lived the homespun life of the peasant, and out of its daily experiences in field, church, house, and tavern, wrought songs and poems which, by their poignancy and genuineness of feeling, their lyrical sweetness, their broad humor, and above all their power of going to the heart of man, inspired all Scotland and England, and are still among the greatest in the world.

Burns' poems are racy of the soil, as frankly local in subject as in dialect. He is not ashamed to paint the homely and everyday aspects of the life about him. The family group, after their week of toil, gathered in patriarchal simplicity about the cotter's hearthstone; the blazing ingle of the country tavern, where the drunken cronies, "o'er all the ills o' life victorious," sing their jolly catches, oblivious of the storm without or the wrathful wife at home; the current controversy between the Auld and New Lights in the Kirk; a wounded hare, or a flock of startled water-fowl,—such are the homely materials ready to his hand, from which his poems are fashioned. We find in them that high gift which cannot be gained by a study of any *Art of Poetry*, of seeing with a fresh and penetrating insight. For while in one sense Burns' poems are local, they are none the less for all the world. In the local, the temporary, and the commonplace, the poet sees the universal; and, beneath the vesture in which life clothes itself, discovers the abiding human significance, which, when told in fitting words in forms of art, becomes a source of strength to mankind.

**Burns' Life.** — Robert Burns, the son of a small farmer in Ayrshire, in the southwestern part of the

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Lowlands of Scotland, was born in 1759. The place of his birth was a clay cottage built by his father, and located in the heart of the country which Burns was afterwards to make famous. Near by was the "bonny Doon" and "the winding Ayr," scenes of the poet's early love-ventures; and old Alloway Kirk, where, in the poem *Tam O' Shanter*, "Auld Nick" piped for the



Alloway Kirk

dancing ghosts. Two miles away was the town of Ayr, with its "twa brigs," its market-place, and its inns, —

"Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,  
For honest men and bonny lasses."

Burns' family was poor, so that the boy got but little education. As a child, however, he was familiar with the songs and ballads of his country, and from his mother and an old nurse he heard tales of devils, ghosts, and fairies, which afterward served him well in some of his most characteristic and humorous poems. In youth, through

all his labor as "a hard-worked ploughboy," he was a great reader, having a ballad-book before him at meal-times, and whistling the songs of Scotland while guiding the plow. On the death of his father in 1784, Robert and his brothers and sisters took a farm together, but it proved unprofitable. By this time he had written numerous songs, and had gained by them considerable local reputation. But his affairs were so involved that he thought of leaving the country, and, with that purpose in view, published his first volume of poems (1786) to defray expenses. It was well received, and the poet was encouraged to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. At Edinburgh, Burns, with his genius and flavor of rusticity, his massive head and glowing eyes, became the reigning sensation. But in Edinburgh he was out of his proper and native element. In 1788 he leased a farm in Dumfriesshire, married Jean Armour, and spent one of his few peaceful and happy years. In 1789 he was appointed exciseman, that is, the district inspector of goods liable to a tax. From this time the habit of intemperance gained on him. His health and spirits failed, and bouts of reckless drinking were followed by intervals of remorse and attempted recovery. His genius did not desert him, and some of his best songs were composed during this miserable time. He died in 1796, worn out and prematurely old at thirty-seven, one of the great song-writers of the world, and Scotland's most representative poet.

**His Sincerity.** — In spite of those weaknesses which cut off a life "that might have grown full straight," Burns' poetry is unmistakably the utterance of a sincere, large-hearted, and essentially noble nature, pleasure-loving and full of laughter as a child, yet broken by a man's grief; a nature with more than a woman's tender-



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ness, and with the poet's soul quivering at the throb of pain.

“ Still thou art blest, compared wi' me,  
The present only toucheth thee;  
But och! I backward cast my e'e  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess and fear.”

Here in the midst of the lingering affectations of the time vibrates the anguish of Burns' *lyrical cry*, quivering with the unmistakable accent of human suffering. This is the universal language of passion not to be learned in the schools. This is his “*sincerity*, his indisputable air of truth,” which Carlyle considered to be Burns' chief excellence. Hence, Burns' love-songs,—from the impassioned flow of *My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose*, to the serene beauty of *To Mary in Heaven*, or to the quiet anguish of *Ae Fond Kiss and then We Sever*, with its fourth stanza:

“ Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted” —

are among the truest and best in the language.

**Poet of Scotland, Nature, and Man.** — Burns is more than the writer of love-lyrics; he is the poet of Nature, of the poor, and of patriotic Scotland. In *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, we have a rapid and faithful sketch of an autumn landscape:

“ November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh,  
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;  
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;  
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose.”

We enter the dwelling, and identify ourselves with the daily life of the poor. "The toil-worn Cotter" coming home at night "weary, o'er the moor," is met by his children, "Th' expectant wee-things." "His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily," and his wife's smile

"Does a' his weary carking cares beguile."

Like Goldsmith, Burns finds in this simple, wholesome life, with its commonplace duties and its cheerful contentment, his country's greatest pride and strength. In the last two stanzas, which he once repeated kneeling bareheaded on Coldstream Bridge across the Tweed, Burns poured out his passionate love for his country, as he did again in the stirring trumpet notes of *Scots Wha Hae Wi' Wallace Bled*.

**Poet of Democracy.** — But Burns' ardent soul was not centered merely on his own love or his own country. He was the poet of democracy, extending the hand of brotherhood to the patriots of France. When Burns wrote that

"Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn,"

he expressed what thousands were coming to feel; and in his poem *For A' That and A' That*, he gave to Europe, then nearing a great social change, an immortal declaration of human equality and of the glory of simple manhood:

"A prince can mak a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and a' that;  
But an honest man's aboon his might,  
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their dignities, and a' that,  
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,  
Are higher rank than a' that.

. . . . .

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For a' that, and a' that,  
It's coming yet, for a' that,  
That man to man, the warld o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that."

But Burns' comprehensive sympathy, like that of Cowper, reaches beyond the circle of human life. He stands in the furrow to look at the "tim'rous" field-mouse, whose tiny house his plow has laid in ruins, and his soul is broad enough to think of the trembling creature gently and humbly as his

"Poor earth-born companion  
An' fellow-mortal."

In fact, though Burns' life was for the most part passed in remote provincial places out of the sweeping current of political and social change, which was producing a new England and a new Europe, he was one of the great poets of revolution. He represented the humanizing tendency of the revolutionary spirit, and its healthy contempt of hypocrisy.

### THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Toward the close of the eighteenth century, we reach the most stormy and critical period in the history of modern Europe. The growing spirit of humanity, which we have traced in poetry, had done much for the betterment of man, working quietly in men's hearts; but it was to do still more in a way less pacific. Poet and philosopher, in France and England, were pleading the cause of the poor, and the rights of man. Made more sensitive to pain and suffering, they had come to examine the theories of government, the duties of sovereigns, and the rights of subjects. Convinced of the dignity and worth of manhood, they denounced oppres-

sion, tyranny, and cruelty. Rousseau called upon men to live in accord with nature; Voltaire scoffed at the shams of mock nobility, and exalted reason in matters of government; Burns had written

“The rank is but the guinea stamp;  
The man’s the gowd for a’ that” —

Cowper, in *The Task*, had cried out against the Bastile (the great prison in Paris) as a shameful “house of bondage;” finally, in France, the toiling masses, starved, overtaxed, oppressed, arose in the might of their long-suffering wrath, and overthrew the Bastile (July 14, 1789). Then

“ France her giant limbs upreared,  
And with that oath which smote earth, air, and sea,  
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free.”

Europe looked on breathless, as the whole glittering fabric of French feudalism, rotten at the base, suddenly crashed into ruin. The ancient barriers of custom and authority were swept away as in a night; the floods were out; the French Revolution had begun.

During the early acts of that terrible drama, it seemed to many that the dreams of poets and philosophers of a Golden Age of peace and brotherhood were about to be realized. Enthusiasm was at the highest. The English poet Blake walked the streets of London wearing the red cockade of the Revolutionists. Even the great statesman Pitt sympathized with them, while Fox, a leader of Parliament, is said to have exclaimed, on hearing of the destruction of the Bastile, “How much is this the greatest event that ever happened in the world, and how much the best!” Edmund

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Burke, indeed, stood aloof from the rest, a solitary and impregnable tower of conservatism; and in Edinburgh the young Walter Scott, with his intense love of the chivalric past, looked on at the fury of demolition with disapproval. But, for the most part, the hopes of youth, and of all the ardent and enthusiastic spirits of the time, went out toward the Revolutionists in a great torrent of exultation. The imagination of the youthful poets, WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, and ROBERT SOUTHEY, all in the impressionable years of opening manhood when the Revolution began, was fired by the idea that the world was being made anew. They trod the earth in rapture, their eyes fixed upon a vision of the dawn. Looking back upon this time, Wordsworth wrote:

"Bliss was it in that Dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven."

The effect of these changes upon literature was threefold. They introduced a higher sincerity and truth in art, an ever widening spirit of brotherhood, and a sense of the worth and dignity of the individual soul which led men to write in a more personal and subjective way than they had done before. The master passion of the new leaders of thought was the longing for something natural and genuine. Wordsworth and Coleridge aimed to write poems that should be true poetically and imaginatively, and be free from the artificialities of the school of Pope. Wordsworth sought to reform "poetic diction," and to set up a simpler and truer manner in its stead. A little later, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) railed against the "shams" of life, and preached that men "should come back to reality, that they should stand upon things and not upon the shows of things."

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

(1770-1850)

William Wordsworth, one of the great leaders in this era of change, was born in 1770 at Cockermouth, a



William Wordsworth

little village on the river Derwent in the English Lake country. On both his father's and mother's side the poet came of a family stock deeply rooted in the country soil, and he may well have inherited from his long line of provincial ancestors that sympathy with the country, and with the simple incidents of country life, which is a principal element in his verse. Born in a singularly lovely region of lake and mountain, remote from the

activities of the outer world, he spent the greater part of his life in daily companionship with Nature. He became the poet of what Lowell has called "Wordsworthshire."

**Preparation.** — Wordsworth's more regular education was obtained at a school in the quaint village of Hawkshead on Esthwaite Water. Later he went to Cambridge; but the fixed routine of college studies failed to touch his enthusiasm. He graduated in 1791, but, as may be supposed, without having distinguished himself. On leaving Cambridge, he spent some months in visiting London and elsewhere, finally crossing to France, where he caught the contagion of Republicanism, and was on the point of offering himself as a leader in the Revolution. His relatives, alarmed for his safety, stopped his supplies; and in 1792, lack of money compelled his return. On reaching England he was without a profession and had no definite prospects. But after three years in this unsettled condition, he was made comparatively independent by a legacy of £900 from a friend. Shortly before this he had made his first ventures in poetry — *An Evening Walk* (1793); *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). In 1796 he took a cottage at Racedown in Dorsetshire with his devoted sister Dorothy, who became one of the great influences in his life, and he resolved to dedicate himself to poetry.

**Fulfilment.** — From this time, Wordsworth's life was of the most studiously simple, severe, and uneventful description, an example of that "plain living and high thinking" in which he believed. It was lived close to Nature, in the circle of deep home attachments, and in the society of a few chosen friends; but it resembled that of Milton in its solemn consecration to the high service of his art, and in its consistent nobility and loftiness of

tone. Leaving Racedown in 1797, Wordsworth settled at Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, Somersetshire, where his genius developed rapidly under the stimulating companionship of his friend Coleridge. Here the two poets worked together, and in 1798 published the *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems to which each contributed.



Rydal Mount

This work, by its deliberate departure from the outworn poetic manner, marks an era in the history of English poetry.

After this, Wordsworth worked steadily, holding to his own notions of poetry in spite of the ridicule of the critics and the neglect of the body of readers. In the winter of 1798-1799 he visited Germany. On his return, he settled in the Lake District, living first in



Dove Cottage, Grasmere (1799–1813), and finally removing to Rydal Mount. In 1802 he married his cousin Mary Hutchinson, also a native of Cumberland. Miss Hutchinson, like Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, had a rare appreciation of poetry. He had thus the devotion and sympathy of two gifted women, both capable of entering into his finest emotions and aspirations. The poet, his wife and sister, thus lived in an ideal and beautiful companionship, unfortunately but too rare in the lives of men of genius. Wordsworth's remaining years were passed at Rydal Mount, except when his tranquil existence was broken by short journeys on the Continent and elsewhere. As he advanced in life, his work won its way in the public favor. He was made Poet Laureate in 1843, and died peacefully April 23, 1850.

**As Poet.** — As a poet Wordsworth was surpassingly great within that somewhat restricted sphere which he has made peculiarly his own. He is deficient in a sense of humor, he possesses but little dramatic force or narrative skill, and he fails in a broad and living sympathy with the diverse passions and interests of human life. Yet he is as truly the poet of the mysterious world we call Nature, as Shakespeare is the poet of the life of man. He, more than all other poets, teaches us to enter into that world and find in it the very temple of God, in which and through which He himself will draw close to us.

**View of Nature.** — At first Wordsworth looked upon Nature with a kind of primitive and unreasoning rapture; Nature then to him was "all in all."

"The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye."

But that time passed, and he came to look upon Nature  
as a living presence that could mold and raise the life  
of man. He found that she could

" . . . so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings."

This is Wordsworth's *transcendentalism*. Nature is  
not to him mere vegetation, subject to the law of growth  
and decay, nor a collection of objects to be described,  
but a manifestation of God, of the Universal Spirit  
which is in and about man. When looking at the  
forms and colors of Nature he says

" . . . I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."

To Wordsworth, the Universe is not a mechanical contrivance, like a huge piece of clockwork, whose motive power is law, but a something divinely alive. He

believed that the secret of life is to hold fast youth's generous emotions, its high imaginings, its deep fountains of joy, as an antidote to the deadening and contaminating influences of the world. To see again in age some aspect of Nature which sank deep into the soul of youth, and which will

". . . flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude " —

to hear again in age that cry of the cuckoo which enchanted us in boyhood, is to revive our youthful rapture, and "beget that golden time again." Thus a "natural piety," binding our days each to each, should protect us against the contagion of the world.

**Its Limitations.**—Wordsworth celebrates the beauty, harmony, and sublimity of Nature; he is fortified by its calm and its unbroken order. But Nature is not all a May day; she has a harsh and terrifying side, of which Wordsworth was apparently oblivious. He is silent as to her mysterious discords of pain, cruelty, and death. So far as we can tell, he is unimpressed by any feeling of her magnificent indifference to man. To this extent his poetry of Nature is partial and incomplete. Nevertheless, in this very incompleteness lies one source of Wordsworth's tranquilizing and "healing" power. We are refreshed and satisfied by the very strength of his conviction that the whole world is but the temple of the living God. Of all the poets who in the eighteenth century came to lead a rouged and tired generation of intrigue and scandal back to that mother-world to which they had become as strangers, Wordsworth proved himself the greatest and most inspired guide. The murmur of the Derwent, the clouds gathered about the setting sun, the splendors of lonely dawns, the solitude

of mountain-peak and lake and forest, all these things had been his world; and consciously and unconsciously, the sublimity of that world, extending about us in its large patience and inscrutable repose, possessed and enlarged his soul. His life rises to the dignity of a great example, because it is so outwardly ordinary and so inwardly exceptional; because he showed us how to make a new use of those familiar sources of joy and comfort which lie open to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. His life was severely simple, yet the world was his, even as, up to the measure of our power of receiving, we may make it ours.

It is this serene and noble simplicity of Wordsworth's life and character that sheds upon certain of his poems an indescribable and altogether incomparable charm. We feel it in *The Solitary Reaper*:

“ Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself —”

and in the poem to *Lucy*:

“ She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
Beside the springs of Dove,  
A maid whom there were none to praise  
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone  
Half hidden from the eye!  
Fair as a star, when only one  
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me!”

Such characteristic and magical excellence refuses to be analyzed or defined.

Wordsworth's sonnets are among the best in the literature; and his longer poems, such as *The Excursion*, are illumined by passages of a wonderful wisdom and beauty. At times, as in the great odes *To Duty* and *On the Intimations of Immortality*, his verse has an elevation and a large majesty of utterance unheard in English poetry since the deep-throated harmonies of Milton. In spite of frequent lapses, Wordsworth's poetic art is of a very high order, and places him with the greatest poets of England.

**Poet of Democracy.** — In a very real sense Wordsworth is the poet of the new democracy, as he is of the new love of Nature. His sense of the underlying *oneness* in Nature and man, and his experience in living through the French Revolution, gave him a profound interest in man as man. He saw in the simple and hardy peasants of his native county, subjects worthy of the highest art of poetry. He found love in "huts where poor men lie." He saw in the old shepherd Michael, in the poor *Idiot Boy*, in *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, in the "wretched parents" seeking *Lucy Gray*, who had been lost in the storm, pathos, suffering, and tragedy worthy of our deepest sympathy.

Matthew Arnold, himself a poetic disciple of Wordsworth, has thus summed up the peculiar greatness of his master's work: "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in Nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it."

**SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE**

(1772-1834)

"Coleridge threw a great stone into the standing pool of contemporary thought."

— WILLIAM HAZLITT.

"We are here to-day not to consider what Coleridge owed to himself, to his family, or to the world, but what we owe to him."

— LOWELL.

Wordsworth lived out his long, blameless, and devoted life under conditions singularly favorable to the full development of his genius. Freed from the pressure of money difficulties, and enabled to live simply amid the loveliest of natural surroundings, happy in his home and in his friends, and blessed with health and energy, he has left us an example of a serene and truly successful life. The story of Coleridge, Wordsworth's friend and fellow-poet, is tragically different. It is the story of a man of rare and varied gifts, who, from whatever cause, could not, or did not, put forth his powers to the full.

**Early Life, Education, and Travel.** — Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the youngest of a large family, was the son of the vicar and schoolmaster at the little town of Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire. His father was an absent-minded man, and a scholar who quoted Hebrew to his congregation as "the immediate language of the Holy Ghost." Left an orphan in his ninth year, Coleridge was admitted to the Charity School at Christ's Hospital, London, and began the unequal fight with life. Here he met the gentle Charles Lamb, who became his lifelong friend, and who speaks of him as "the poor friendless boy." From the first, Coleridge seems to have lived

in a dream-world. He was unusually precocious and preferred the society of books to that of boys. As a little child, he wandered over the Devonshire fields, slashing the tops off weeds and nettles in the character of one of the "Seven Champions of Christendom;" and in school at London he would lie for hours on the roof, gazing after the drifting clouds while his school-fellows played football in the court below; or in the midst of the crowded Strand, he would fancy himself Leander swimming the Hellespont. A gentleman interested in him gave him a subscription to a library; and thereafter Coleridge "skulked out" to the library and read "right through the catalogue." Even at fifteen he had "bewildered" himself in metaphysics and theological controversy, and charmed and astonished his hearers by his wonderful talk. His uncle in London, he tells us, "used to carry me from coffee-house to coffee-house, and tavern to tavern, where I drank and talked and disputed as if I had been a man." Lamb recalled these days with rapture: "How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration; . . . to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus, . . . or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar, while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy!*"

At nineteen Coleridge went to Cambridge and furnished his rooms with no thought of his inability to pay the upholsterers; then, under the pressure of a comparatively trifling debt, he gave up all his prospects, fled to London, and enlisted in the Dragoons. He returned to Cambridge, but left there in 1794 without taking a degree. Visiting Oxford in this year, he met the youthful Southey, in whom he found a kindred

spirit. Both were feeling that impulse from the French Revolution which was agitating Europe. They agreed that human society should be reconstructed, and decided to begin the reform by establishing an ideal community in the wilds of America. They chose for the site of the new community the banks of the Susquehanna, because of the music of its name. The new form of government was to be called a Pantisocracy, or a government by all, and the citizens were to combine farming and literature. In 1795 Coleridge married Sarah Fricker, and the Pantisocratic scheme was given up for lack of funds. It was about two years after this that Coleridge met Wordsworth at Alfoxden in Somersetshire, and wrote his greatest poem, *The Ancient Mariner*. In 1798 he left for Germany, where in two years he mastered the German tongue and went deep into German metaphysics. From the new intellectual life upon which that nation had just entered, Coleridge received a fresh and powerful stimulus, and was one of the first to introduce the new German philosophy and literature into England.

**Poetry, Opium, and Metaphysics.** — Coleridge returned to England in 1800, and began writing political articles for the *Morning Post*. So successful were they, by reason of Coleridge's wide knowledge and his philosophical and historical method of dealing with political questions, that he was offered an interest in the *Post* which would give him an income of £2000 a year, provided he would devote all his time to that paper. But this he rejected, with the remark that he "would not give up the country and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times £2000, — in short, that beyond £250 a year he considered money a real evil." Instead, he went to Keswick, among the English Lakes, to lead a life of quiet and study near his friends Wordsworth



and Southey. There it was that he wrote his last important poems, — the second part of *Christabel* and the *Ode to Dejection*, — and turned his attention more and more to literary criticism and metaphysics. Coleridge's creative energy was being sapped, and his splendid intellect clouded, by the use of opium. He had first taken the drug to quiet the torments of gout and neuralgia, and had gradually come more and more under its terrible spell, until, about 1803, the habit became fixed. For fifteen years he struggled to free himself from its toils, seeking relief from mental depression and illness in study and travel. His will, never strong, seems to have been paralyzed by the drug, so that his many projects were dropped, his family was left to the care of others, and Coleridge himself became dependent on the help of friends like the Wedgewoods, De Quincey, and Byron. Finally, under the care of a Mr. Gilman, a surgeon at Highgate, London, in whose house he found a home, he conquered the fatal habit.

Carlyle, who visited Coleridge at Mr. Gilman's, says, he "gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings, a life heavy-laden, half vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment . . . a heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man." Once, with the sense of power strong within him, Coleridge had looked forward to the composition of many books, the very titles of which, he says, would have filled a volume; now, with so much yet undone, he was beaten and disheartened, tired by the long fight against himself and the world. In one of his later poems he pictures himself as listless and inert in the midst of the glad young vigor of the spring, idle while "all Nature seems at work." Yet there was no bitterness in his nature, no envy of other men's

success. He had a genuine delight in Wordsworth's great achievements, and to the last showed a noble and disinterested concern for increasing man's knowledge of truth. His unfinished life ended in 1834. The world had let him die in the conviction of failure, but no sooner had the grave closed over him than England resounded with his praise.

**Influence on His Time.** — In estimating Coleridge's contribution to the thought of the nineteenth century, we must consider not his work only but the inspiring power of his personality and his talk. His conversation was, by all accounts, far-reaching, wonderful, and almost endless. Though he wrote only one great and perfect poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, though his critical and philosophical writings are fragmentary, Coleridge was perhaps the greatest single influence upon the minds of his contemporaries. Wordsworth, Hazlitt, Southey, Carlyle, were indebted to him; and Lamb said that Coleridge "first kindled in him, if not the power, the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindness." This stimulating influence was exerted largely in conversation, by "his long arrow-flights of thought." Hazlitt says that in his prose "Hardly a gleam is to be found . . . of the brilliancy and richness of those stores of thought and language that he pours out incessantly" in his talk. And one of Coleridge's editors says, "Throughout a long-drawn summer's day would this man talk to you in low, equable, and musical tones, concerning all things human and divine." It is by this power and by the number of new and valuable ideas that he put in circulation, and by the number of minds he "excited into activity," that the true worth of Coleridge's life must be judged.

**As Philosopher and Critic.** — In Coleridge's varied mental activity, the writing of poetry was but one

interest, even perhaps a somewhat incidental one. His discursive energy spent itself in philosophy, in theology, in political journalism, and in criticism. Although Coleridge never developed a *system* of philosophy, he had a profound influence as a prophet or seer. As Carlyle said, "he had, especially among young, inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. . . . A sublime man; who alone in those dark days had saved his crown of spiritual manhood, escaping from the black materialisms and revolutionary deluges with 'God, Freedom, Immortality,' still his." He strove to infuse into the common sense and materialistic English philosophy the more ideal and spiritual character of contemporary German thought. He applied his philosophical habits of mind to literary criticism, and became the most profound critic of his time. He examined the functions of the human mind, and the source of our ideas of beauty; and in reviewing works of literary art he aimed to show their merits rather than their faults. In the *Biographia Literaria*, or *Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, he announced his critical principles, and opposed what he called "the manufacturing of poems." He showed that real poetry must contain something more than common sense and correct meter, that it must be born of high imaginative power and sincere feeling. His lectures on Shakespeare began an era in the history of English Shakespearean criticism.

**As Poet.** — Coleridge left but little poetry. He seems to have required peculiar conditions for poetic composition; inspiration came to him suddenly, in mysterious gusts; but often before a poem was finished it as suddenly left him, apparently as powerless as an ordinary mortal to complete what he alone could have

begun. Thus, after writing the second part of *Christabel*, a poem born of the very breath of inspiration, he waited vainly until the end of his life for the return of the creative mood. He tells us that when writing *Kubla Khan*, a poem which came to him in his sleep as a kind of vision, he was interrupted "by a person on business from Porlock," and that on his return he was unable to complete it. Yet, notwithstanding the fragmentary nature of his work, Coleridge's poetry has new and great beauties which influenced many of the later poets of England. He introduced a new and captivating music into English verse, and an element of strange and supernatural beauty. He had the power, above most poets of his time, of creating by sheer force of imagination, and, as it were, out of the vacancy of space, visions unearthly but real. His descriptions of Nature are often condensed and vivid, like those of Dante, showing the power to enter into the spirit of a scene and reproduce it with a few quick strokes:

"The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;  
At one stride comes the dark."

**The Ancient Mariner.** — The greatest of his poems, *The Ancient Mariner*, combined many of the elements of the new romanticism: it combined the supernatural element and the quick sympathy with Nature of which we have spoken, with the interest in the old ballad poetry of England. Not only is it a ballad in form; it is filled with those ghostly and mysterious elements which, in a cruder shape, enter so largely into the folk-song and legend of primitive superstition. With wonderful skill Coleridge has woven this supernatural element into a narrative of possible incidents, so realistically told as to fully persuade us of their truth. Moreover, in this shad-

owy world, we are haunted by the continual suggestion of some underlying moral significance. We can hardly fail to feel that Coleridge has here written for us the great poem of *charity*. The mariner on some lonely and distant sea kills an albatross, a creature that has trusted him, that has loved him, that has partaken of the sailors' food and come at their call. The necessary penalty for this breach in the fellowship of living things is an exclusion from that fellowship. He and his shipmates are pursued by the Spirit of Vengeance and terrified by the Spectre of Life-in-Death. His companions fall dead about him. He is

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea!"

until by his compassion for the "happy living things" about the ship, which he at first despised — by the renewal of that love or charity against which he has sinned — he takes the first step toward his return into the great brotherhood of animate creation.

Looked at from this aspect, *The Ancient Mariner* becomes the profoundest and perhaps most beautiful expression of that feeling of sympathy for all living things which we have found uttering itself with increasing distinctness in later eighteenth-century literature.

**Poet of Nature and Man.** — But Coleridge is more than a poet of the supernatural and of charity. Like Wordsworth, he sees in Nature the outward manifestation of a divine presence and energy. But he realizes, as Wordsworth did not appear to do, that to each man Nature is but what his mood or his power of spiritual apprehension makes her. Like Wordsworth, too, he was a poet of freedom. As he watched the promise of the French Revolution depart in the license and frenzy

of the Reign of Terror, Coleridge abandoned his youthful hopes for a settled conservatism. Burke had written at the opening of the Revolution "that the effect of liberty to individuals is that they may do what they please; we ought to see what it will please them to do before we risk congratulations which may be soon turned into complaints." In his *France; an Ode*, Coleridge reaches a similar conclusion. He sees that true liberty must rest upon obedience to a moral law, and that license, or liberty unrestrained, is but tyranny in another form, the tyranny of evil habits and desires.

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

(1771-1832)

Burns was the lawful heir to the songs of Scotland, Walter Scott to her romance and her ballads. The peasant life of Scotland, as it then was, belonged pre-eminently to the Ayrshire plowman; but the romantic past of Scotland, with its lawlessness, its wild heroism, its chivalric daring, its fascinating background of mountain, loch, and glen, belonged to Scott, the child of the best blood of the Scottish Border.

**Life.** — Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, in 1771. Edinburgh, picturesque and romantic in itself, stands in the midst of a region crowded with memorials of Scotland's past. When we look at the map of this historic region, the very names of the places — Tweeddale, Eskdale, Teviotdale, the Cheviot Hills, Lammermuir, Yarrow, Stirling, the Trossachs, Melrose, Dryburgh, Hawthornden — are full of poetic and historic suggestion, and all this was Scott's birthright. He was born in this land, and the blood of men who had helped to

make it famous was in his veins. "In Scott," writes Andrew Lang, "met the blood of Highlands and Lowlands, Celtic, Teutonic, and Norman."

**Sandy-Knowe.** — Scott's father was a writer to the signet (or barrister); his mother, Anne Rutherford, was the daughter of a distinguished Edinburgh physician. When Scott was eighteen months old a serious illness left him incurably lame. He was a delicate child, and in his third year he was sent to his grandfather's farm at Sandy-Knowe, in the valley of the Tweed. On a neighboring crag was Smailholme Castle, the scene of Scott's ballad, *The Eve of St. John*; a few miles away

". . . fair Tweed flows round holy Melrose,  
And Eildon slopes to the plain."

Scott's conscious life began among these scenes; their influence entered into him as a child and remained with him until the end. He would lie on the grass, watching the sheep, or listen eagerly to strange tales of Border forays from the old shepherd, or "Cow Baillie," who had charge of the flocks and herds. He loved to hear scraps of old ballads and ancient songs, and thus, while his education was irregular, he came to know the past of his country as he only knows it who learns it not from books but from the traditions of the people themselves.

**Knowledge of Scottish Scenery and Life.** — To this knowledge of Scotland's history and romance Scott added, as he grew to manhood, a minute acquaintance with the scenes in which all this drama of the past had been enacted. He knew the little-traveled country roads, the nooks and corners of Scotland. He knew the people, as he only does who enters the doors of many a lonely farmhouse. Such knowledge gave life



Sir Walter Scott  
From the portrait by Sir John Watson Gordon





and truth to his stories and his poems, when he retold in after life the

“tales that charmed *him* yet a child.”

By this direct knowledge and comprehensive sympathy, he was able, as it were, to absorb Scotland herself, the outward aspect of her valleys, glens, and lochs, her towns, her fishing villages and hamlets, her people's life, her history, spirit, and tradition, and lift them, by the simple force of his imaginative and poetic art, into the unchanging region of literature.

**Early Literary Work.** — In 1778, when he was seven years old, Scott was sent to the high school of Edinburgh. He loved romantic literature, but he refused to learn Greek. In 1786 he entered his father's law office, and in 1792 he was called to the bar. In 1796, the year of the death of Burns, Scott began his literary career by publishing his version of the ballads of his own country, and two volumes of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802) were the first result of his labors. But Scott was himself a Minstrel of the Scottish Border. —

“The last of all the bards was he  
Who sung of Border chivalry.”

**The Lay of the Last Minstrel.** — After translating German ballads and collecting Scottish ones, it was but natural that Scott should take the further step and pass on to original composition. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, his first extended attempt in this direction, appeared in 1805. The strangeness, vigor, and beauty of the poem, the interest of its story, the buoyant and spirited movement of its verse, fascinated a public accustomed to Cowper's mild reflections, or Crabbe's realism.

"He blew his bugle so loud and hoarse,  
 That the dun-deer started at fair Craikcross;  
 He blew again so loud and clear,  
 Through the gray mountain-mist there did lances appear;  
 And the third blast rang with such a din  
 That the echoes answer'd from Pentoun-linn,  
 And all his riders came lightly in."

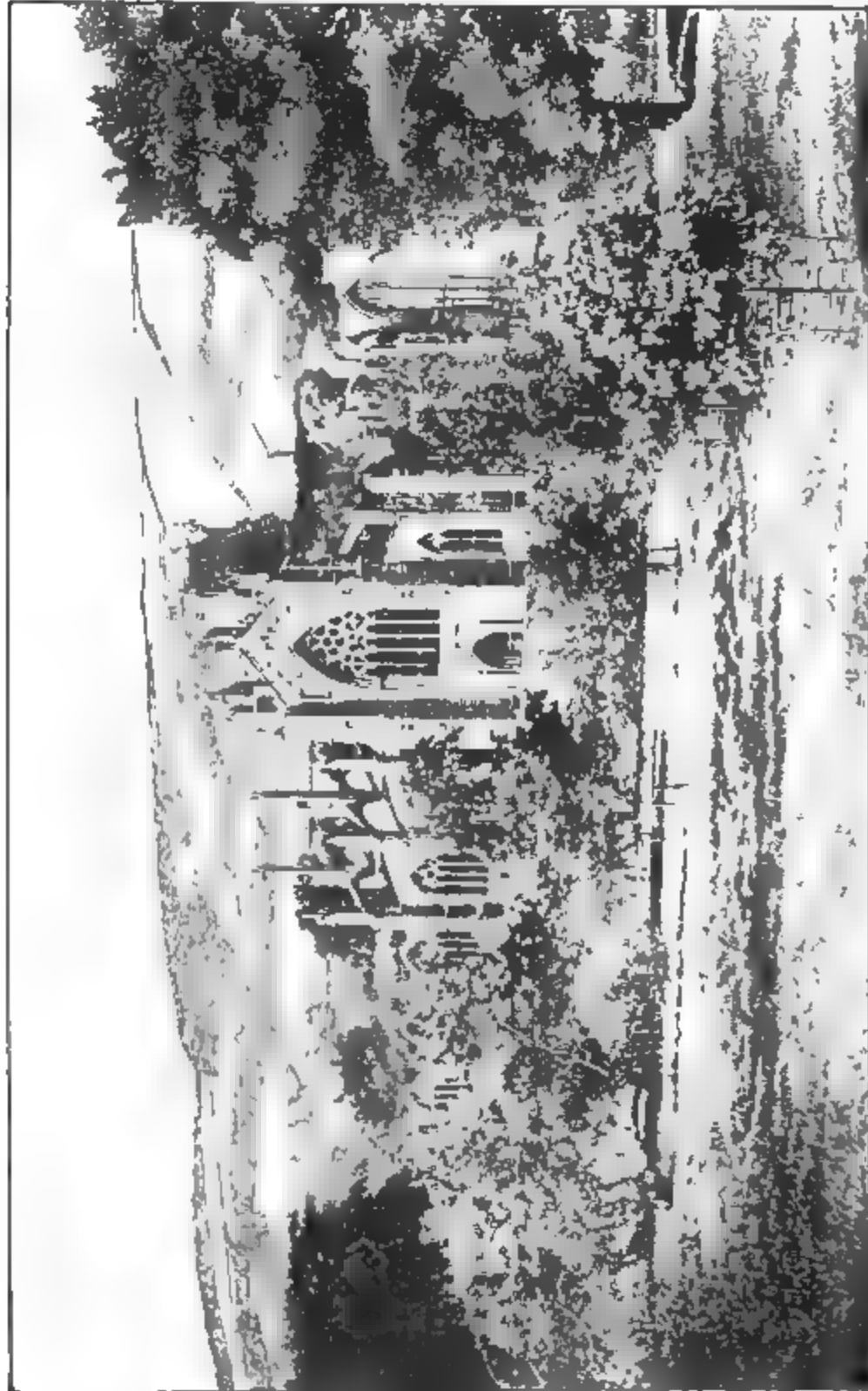
Scott's verse has lost its novelty, but in reading such lines as these, we can still feel the force of that magic which once enchanted the world. The *Lay* was followed by *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and by other poems.

**The Waverley Novels.**—Meanwhile, Scott's poetry had found imitators and had lost something of the charm of novelty. Byron, who had sprung into sudden fame by the publication of the first instalment of *Childe Harold* (1812), was the poetic sensation of the hour. Scott, who never thought himself a great poet, left the field open to his brilliant rival. He gave up writing poetry, he declared with a genuine frankness, because Byron "beat him," and he turned to the writing of novels. In 1814 he published *Waverley*. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* made an epoch in English poetry, *Waverley* made an epoch in English fiction. Scott had conquered and captivated the public once by his poetry, he was now to conquer it a second time by his prose. *Waverley*, which had been published anonymously, was followed by novel after novel from the pen of the same mysterious author. After writing some of his best stories of Scottish life, — *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *The Antiquary* (1816) among the number, — Scott won a triumph in the field of English history by *Ivanhoe* (1819), probably the most popular and in some respects the most fascinating of his romances. A

few years later he published *Quentin Durward* (1823), the first of his novels in which he passed beyond the British Isles and laid the scene in foreign lands. Besides getting through an appalling mass of other work, Scott wrote over thirty novels and stories between 1814 and 1831, an average of about two a year.

**Prosperity and Failure.** — In 1812 Scott had bought land on the Tweed near Melrose, and there he built for himself the great house he called Abbotsford. For some years his life at Abbotsford was busy and successful. He was Sheriff of Selkirkshire and Clerk of the Law Courts; he was the country gentleman, the most hospitable of hosts; he was antiquarian, poet, novelist, and man of letters, and — to his sorrow — he was man of business also, a silent partner in the firm of his friends and publishers the Ballantynes. In 1820 Scott was made a Baronet, and two years later he represented Scotland when the King visited Edinburgh. In 1826, when he was at the height of his fame, and when every ambition seemed gratified, Scott found himself involved as secret partner in the failure of the Ballantynes, and personally liable to the extent of £117,000. Scott's goodness and strength were equal to the emergency. He was no longer young, he had worked terribly and his health was breaking, but he set himself to his task with a steadfast courage.

In two years (1826–1828) he had earned nearly £40,000 for his creditors by his painful but unflinching toil. Shortly before his sudden change of fortune Scott had begun to keep a journal. This *Journal*, written for no eye but his own, has been published, and the reader can now live through those years with Scott, and know him as he was. The *Journal* is a noble book, the deepest and noblest, in some respects, that Scott



Melrose Abbey

ever wrote. No one can read its brief, manly record of that gallant fight with adversity, no one can follow the story of that struggle, — saddened by domestic losses, by failing health and by waning powers, yet indomitably maintained until the last, — without knowing that here was indeed a man. Great as Scott was in his prosperity, it was only in these years of searching trial that his latent greatness was fully revealed. But the strain on body and mind was not to be borne. After his return from a Continental tour, undertaken in the vain hope of restoring health to mind and body, he died peacefully in his home at Abbotsford, September 21, 1832. He was buried in the ruined Abbey of Dryburgh, among the scenes and associations he had loved.

**Character and Work.** — There is no need to dwell on Scott's character. A hundred years ago Byron declared that Scott was the only successful genius he ever knew who was "as genuinely beloved as a man" as he was "admired as an author." From that day to this, the world has loved Sir Walter and honored his manhood as well as read his books. Even Carlyle, who undervalued the *Waverley Novels*, declared that Scott had no cant about him, and that he was "the soundest specimen of British manhood put together in this eighteenth century of time."

The position of Scott in literature seems a strikingly isolated one. He not only wrote about the past, but in many respects belonged to it rather than to our modern world. The poetry of the nineteenth century is intellectual, heavy with its burden of thought; Scott's poetry, spirited, rapid in movement, and often careless in execution, is the poetry of action. Scott, indeed, was by nature an old-time man of action, rather than a modern man of letters. Born of good fighting-stock,

he had in him the stuff out of which soldiers and leaders are made. Modern poets are fond of insisting upon the supremacy and permanence of art; Scott set the doer of the deed higher than the poet who celebrated it in song. It was this quality that helped to make him one of the few really successful narrative poets of our literature. It was the minstrel's office to sing the deeds of heroes, and Scott is preëminent among the modern poets of war. His descriptions of battles, it has often been said, are the most Homeric in English literature. His ballads, *The Eve of St. John*, *Red Harlaw*, and the rest, are not mere ingenious imitations, they have the fire and force of the born minstrel. The same vigor and wholesomeness are found in many of Scott's songs.

**As Novelist.** — In the field of fiction Scott is one of the greatest of historical romancers. Although he is not strictly "true to history," he is true to the fundamental and enduring facts of life. In the *Waverley Novels* he revived for the nineteenth century the life of the Middle Ages, not in its bald realism, but softened and idealized by a poetic imagination, and enveloped in an atmosphere of romance. His detailed knowledge of the costumes and manners of the past enabled him to people those shadowy centuries for us with men and women, who, if not entirely real or substantial, are interesting, as the figures in an ancient tapestry, because they suggest to the mind the form and color, the glory and action, of a departed time. We must not, however, think of Scott solely as the great revealer of the past. He is probably greatest when he puts aside the trappings of historical romance, and shows us the daily life of the Scottish people, in the smoke of its peat fires, in its humor, its poverty, its tragedy, and its homely toil.

**Summary.** — When we review the wide range and high average excellence of Scott's work, and remember the ease and rapidity with which it was produced, we feel that he possessed a creative power rare even among the great geniuses of the literature. He did not enter deeply into the problems of life either in his poetry or in his novels. He did not seek to teach philosophy under the guise of fiction. For the most part, he was content to please, delighting in the story for the story's sake. He thought that life was good and that a wholesome enjoyment was to be gained from action. He admired honor and courtesy and bravery among men, and beauty and gentleness and modesty among women. He had no "message;" he did not preach to us, but he was a kindly, high-minded gentleman, and it is good to be with him in his books. He rose to be great, "but he was always good," and his works bear witness to the breadth, sympathy, and purity of one of the great creative intellects of our literature.

### CHARLES LAMB

(1775-1834)

While Scott, "the Wizard of the North," was thus turning to the wars and pageantry of the past, with healthy delight in that life of action and glory, Charles Lamb in London, living his quiet life "amidst the sweet security of streets," was poring over the old dramatists, and writing essays in which a love of old things — old books, old places, old buildings, old names and memories — finds a chief place. Scott loves the past for its deeds, Lamb for its thought, its venerability. Himself a rare bit of antiquity, he imparts to his work a flavor of the old writers, without sacrificing his individ-



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uality, and wins us completely by his great and entirely frank heart. Lamb is one of the most beloved of English men of letters, and perhaps the most delicate of English humorists.

**Life.** — Charles Lamb — called by Coleridge the “gentle-hearted Charles” — was born in London, 1775, in the Inner Temple, one of the most venerable groups of buildings in the great metropolis, and there he spent his first seven years. From the first he was thus surrounded by associations with the past. As a child his imagination dwelt upon the old “almost effaced sundials,” upon the Gothic Hall, the dignified and solemn figures of barristers, in their wigs and court gowns, — “the mythology of the Temple.” “In those days,” he says, “I saw Gods, ‘as old men covered with a mantle,’ walking upon the earth.” His father was a clerk to one of the barristers, Mr. Salt, in whose library Charles and his sister Mary spent many hours, and “browsed at will on that fair and wholesome pasturage” “of good old English reading.” From his eighth to his fifteenth year Charles studied as a “blue-coat boy” at Christ’s Hospital, and there began his lifelong friendship with his fellow-student Coleridge. On leaving school, Lamb obtained a clerkship in the South Sea House, and two years later in the India Office, where he remained for thirty-three years. Soon after his entering business, Lamb, through the ill health of his father, became the chief support of the little family. But the quiet of their household was broken by a terrible event. Mary Lamb, who had several times been attacked by temporary insanity, in a new and more terrible paroxysm stabbed her mother to the heart (1796). Mary was taken to an asylum, where she recovered, and Charles procured her release on solemnly promising to take care

of her. This tragedy determined Lamb's future life. Thenceforth, after his father's death, he devoted himself to the care of his afflicted sister. For intervals, which he called "between the acts," they lived quietly in the most devoted companionship, Mary aiding in her brother's literary work, and presiding at their little receptions, which Coleridge and sometimes Wordsworth attended. Then, again, Mary would "fall ill," and return for a time to the asylum.

Lamb's time was taken up with his duties to his sister, and with his daily work in the India Office. Yet he made many friends and found leisure hours to devote to literature. It was his custom to rise early, to work at the office from ten to four, "in the contemplation of indigoes, cottons, raw-silks, piece-goods, flowered and otherwise," as he facetiously remarks; after office hours to stroll into the suburbs or among the bookshops; and in the evening to pore over his old books, his "midnight darlings" and "ragged veterans," or to write his immortal *Essays of Elia*. His sister would sit at the end of the table, reading or doing some household work, or writing her tales from Shakespeare. On Wednesday evenings, it was Lamb's custom to give parties for his literary friends. His house was open to all, to come and go as they pleased. There Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, and others met, and enjoyed an evening of whist, cold supper, and brilliant talk. One of that party says, "Often a piece of sparkling humour was shot out that illuminated the whole evening. Sometimes there was a flight of high and earnest talk that took half way towards the stars." And Hazlitt tells us that Lamb "always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening." The truth is, Charles Lamb had the

rare faculty of extracting from what to many would have been only a life of hardship, drudgery, and self-sacrifice, some of the highest pleasures life can afford; he had the satisfaction of doing the duty nearest at hand; he felt deeply the tragedy and the humor of life; he kept his friendships; and through his essays he won the love of posterity.

**Retirement and Death.** — In 1825 Lamb was retired from the India Office on a pension. He was like a school-boy at Christmas. In *The Superannuated Man* he describes in a most humorous way his being called before the head of the firm, and his ecstasy at being free. "It was like passing from Time to Eternity," he says. Lamb's literary career was practically over by 1829. He died in 1834, his sister surviving him thirteen years. They were buried together in the churchyard of Edmonton in Middlesex.

**As Critic and Essayist.** — Apart from his letters and a few poems such as *The Old Familiar Faces*, Lamb is remembered by three works. His *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Wrote about the Time of Shakespeare* (1807), a collection of some of the best passages from the Elizabethan dramatists, did much to arouse new interest in a great body of writers then for the most part neglected. In the few modest commentaries which Lamb made upon them in the form of foot-notes, there is shown an insight, taste, and depth of suggestion which did much to put criticism on a sound and dignified basis. Lamb, Coleridge, and William Hazlitt were the first great English critics of the nineteenth century who aimed to perceive and understand the power and beauty in a work of art, and, analyzing it, to discover it to the reader.

**The Essays of Elia. The Familiar Essay.** — Lamb is best known, however, by his *Essays of Elia*, published

in the *London Magazine* between 1820 and 1833. In these, he is one of our greatest writers in that unconventional, intimate, conversational literary form known as the *personal* or *familiar* essay. In this kind of composition the author admits us to his library, and we get to know him personally — his tastes, his likes and dislikes, his prejudices. He dilates upon his favorite books, on his pleasure in the theater, in walking and writing, and even on the “flavor incomparable” of a well-turned roast pig. He is usually a man of the town, who knows men, women, books, plays, gossip; who casts an unique glance upon the world, and seems to have nothing in the world to do but to entertain you. He never preaches, and never has any ambition to write a philosophy; he is content to talk, to write for a moment’s pastime the thoughts of the day, to record the manners of the time, and tea-table and coffee-house chat; to describe actors and characters on the stage. He warms over the claret of familiarity and confidence, and talks of his “modest virtues and amiable weaknesses.” Often too he strikes a deeper note, and bares to the reader his inmost heart. The chief writers of this kind of essay in the early nineteenth century were Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and William Hazlitt. In the *Essays of Elia*, Lamb writes on such subjects as old china, his relations, the chimney-sweepers and beggars of the metropolis. These essays, though written on apparently trivial subjects, have gained a permanent place in English literature. They are characterized by an exquisite ripeness and manliness of thought, by much caprice and whimsicality, and by Lamb’s love of joking in a quiet and richly humorous way. In them we are brought very close to a character that is no less lovable than unique.

*The Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) were the joint work of Charles Lamb and his sister Mary. They are prose narratives of the most important of Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies, written for the "young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare." In this work the brother and sister show their mutual love of Elizabethan English, their shrewd insight into human nature, and their entire sympathy with the genius of Shakespeare. With fine discriminating taste they have preserved the spirit, and as far as possible the language, of their originals, aiming to give to children "a few hints and little foretastes of the great pleasure which awaits them in their elder years."

### THOMAS DE QUINCEY

(1785-1859)

Thomas De Quincey was born just fifteen years after Wordsworth and just fifteen years before Macaulay,—a fact suggestive of his general relation to literary history. Early admiration and affection connect him with Wordsworth and his great contemporaries. His affinity with Coleridge is especially close, and with him he was instrumental in bringing German literature and philosophy into England. On the other hand, he is associated with Macaulay in the rise of the new periodical literature. With Lamb, Hazlitt, Jeffrey, and Sydney Smith, De Quincey is also associated with that group of essay writers who were making an era in criticism.

His literary career began in 1821, with the appearance, in the *London Magazine*, of his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. The novelty of the subject, the unsparing frankness of these self-revelations, and their wonderful style and imagery, secured for the new writer

an immediate success. From this time De Quincey was distinctively a writer for magazines, being connected during the forty years of his literary life with *Blackwood's Magazine*, and others. He was a shy, obscure scholar, full of a winning grace and charm; a marvelous talker when he was in the mood; a lover of children; with all his peculiarities, a man of gentle and affectionate nature.

**His Style.** — De Quincey's essays have a wonderful diversity in subject and style. This may be due in part to the widening interests and growing cultivation of the reading public, but it is more directly attributable to the many-sidedness of De Quincey himself. He was a born student and lover of books, but at the same time he was a close observer of the life about him. He delighted in intellectual subtleties, yet he possessed all that passion for style, that pleasure in effects of word-melody, which is emphatically the endowment of the poet. Thus, the reminiscences of the Lake poets, or the autobiographical sketches, are, for the most part, the outcome of De Quincey's powers to observe; his essays on such widely separated subjects as theology, political economy, Greek poetry, English politics, and German metaphysics attest the range of his scholarship; while still other sides of his nature are revealed in the fantastic humor of his *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, in the narrative skill of *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe*, or in the prose poetry of his *Levana and our Ladies of Sorrow*. The style in his essays ranges from simple, unadorned expression to the most impassioned apostrophes or delicately modulated strains of melody. Delightful in his humor, fascinating in his narratives, influential as the reviver of an impassioned and musically modulated style, De Quincey has taken his place among the masters of English prose.

## THE LATER POETS OF THE REVOLUTION

The appalling plunge into murder and anarchy, which followed hard upon the triumph of the Revolutionists in France, shocked into a sudden sobriety much of the vague enthusiasm for the cause of man. Thousands who, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, had joined in the contagious outcry for liberty and equality recoiled like them in disgust from a revolution which had brought the dregs of society uppermost, and cast to the surface man's primitive baseness and cruelty. In France, the towering genius and ambition of Napoleon were hurrying the nation back into despotism; in England, the government set its face against sorely needed reforms, through an unreasoning fear that change might prove the invitation to a Reign of Terror. Yet the Revolution had none the less begun a new epoch in the history of England and of the Continent; in spite of the efforts of conservative governments, its fires still smoldered everywhere beneath the surface, ready at a breath to burst into flame. After the battle of Waterloo (1815) the great powers of Europe met at Vienna and entered into a compact known as *The Holy Alliance*. The ostensible object of this alliance was to promote peace and goodwill; its real purpose was to crush the spirit of democracy. It would have blotted the Revolution out of history, by reviving that older Europe which, in reality, no congress could restore. Austria, under her Prime Minister Metternich, threw her whole weight on the side of absolutism; but demonstrations among the students in the German universities (1817), insurrections in Spain and Naples, and the heroic struggles of the Greeks under Turkish oppression, showed that the revolutionary spirit was unextinguished.

England was passing through a critical period of popular distress and dangerous discontent. On the one hand, a government set in its conservatism; on the other, a people unsettled by new industrial conditions, impoverished by overtaxation, impatient to gain a voice in their own government, and brought at length by poor crops to the verge of actual starvation. The assembling of the people for free speech was pronounced illegal; and at a great meeting at Manchester the cavalry charged upon the crowd, and answered their petitions for a vote in Parliamentary elections with the edge of the sword (1819). A year later a conspiracy was formed to murder the members of the Cabinet.

Four poets, — LORD BYRON (1788–1824), PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822), THOMAS CAMPBELL (1777–1844), and THOMAS MOORE (1779–1852), — all born during the last quarter of the preceding century, express in greater or less degree the spirit of this time. Each was, in his way, a poet of the Revolution, a lover of liberty, a believer in progress. When Wordsworth and Coleridge sang their first pæans to Liberty, her white robes were still stainless, her fame unspotted. The poets of this younger group in their early manhood had looked on at the crimes committed in her name; they had breathed in an atmosphere heavy with the sense of failure; they were confronted with an oppression and misery calculated to make them embittered and rebellious.

## LORD BYRON

(1788–1824)

In some respects, Lord Byron, in the power and brilliancy of his genius, in his audacious and dramatic



personality, thrusts himself forward as the most truly representative poet of this time. We see in his life, character, and work a rebellious arraignment of life, a passionate, impotent complaint against the entire order of things.

**His Heritage.** — George Gordon Byron was born in London, in 1788. The Byrons were thought to be descended from a Scandinavian settler in Normandy. The family had come into England with William the Conqueror. They were a fighting race; we find them in the field at Crécy, and at other great battles. Ungovernable and proud, the spirit of the Viking seemed to survive in them; and after long generations they produced a poet. Byron reminds us of the hero in some Greek tragedy, born to a heritage of guilt and suffering. His grand-uncle, "the wicked lord," was convicted of manslaughter, and, like some of his nephew's miserable heroes, was cast out from human society. The father of the poet, Captain John Byron, known as "Mad Jack," was a profligate and heartless spendthrift; his mother, Catherine Gordon, who traced her descent from James I, was a silly and impulsive woman, subject to furious paroxysms of temper. Having squandered his wife's fortune, Captain Byron left her in greatly straitened circumstance shortly after the birth of their son. The worse than fatherless child was thus left wholly at the mercy of an injudicious and passionate woman, who treated him, according to her passing whims, with alternate harshness and over-indulgence.

**Youth and Manhood.** — Under these wretched conditions Byron's life began. He grew up a spoiled child, passionate, headstrong, sullen, and defiant. On all this was piled yet another misery — he was lame, owing

to the deformity of one foot; and to his vain and morbidly sensitive nature this misfortune was a lifelong torture. In 1798, by the death of "the wicked lord," he succeeded to the title and family estates. In 1801 he entered Harrow, where he was noted as a fighter, and acted as ringleader in a boyish rebellion against the authorities. Four years later he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he led the life of the idle and dissipated undergraduate. Here his "gyp," or college servant, spoke of him with respect as "a young gentleman of tumultuous passions." In 1807 he published his first book of poems, *Hours of Idleness*. An unfavorable review of this youthful venture, which had in reality but little merit, aroused his passionate temper, and he struck back fiercely in a satire on *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). After two years of Continental travel (1809-1811), he gave the world the splendid record of his impressions in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* (1812). The result was one of the most sudden and memorable successes in English literary history; in his own familiar phrase, Byron awoke one morning and found himself famous. The poetic star of Scott, who had been enchanting the world with his vigorous ballads of romance and chivalry, declined before the brightness of this new luminary. The public turned from tales of Border warfare, from the mailed knights and moated castles of medievalism, to enter under Byron's guidance the unfamiliar regions of the East. *The Giaour* (1813) is the first of a succession of Eastern tales, in the meter of Scott, each of which increased the fever of popular enthusiasm. In these tales the Byronic hero, first outlined in *Childe Harold*, reappears under different names and varying disguises, with significant persistence in all his solitary, joyless, and misanthropic personality.

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In 1815 Byron married Miss Milbanke, but after about a year they separated for reasons not fully known. The public turned furiously upon the man it had so lately idolized, and overwhelmed him with its sudden condemnation. Smarting under a sense of injustice, Byron left England forever, pursued across Europe by the outcry against him. After spending some time at Geneva under the stimulating influence of Shelley, he settled at length on the "waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay who betakes himself to the waters." During this time he wrote with extraordinary power and rapidity, producing, among a great number of other poems, the remaining cantos of *Childe Harold*, *Cain*, *Manfred*, and *Don Juan*. At length he seemed to weary of poetry, as he did of everything, declaring that he did not consider it his "vocation," but that, if he lived ten years, he was determined to do something in new fields. His ardent and invincible spirit found the way. He threw himself into the cause of the Greeks, then struggling against Turkish despotism, and in 1823 chartered a vessel and sailed from Genoa in their aid. He reached Missolonghi, and was made commander-in-chief of an expedition against Lepanto. But the presentiment of his approaching death was upon him. On his thirty-sixth birthday, while yet at Missolonghi, he composed some verses which seem touched with the spirit of prophecy:

"If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*  
The land of honourable death  
Is here. . . .  
Then look around, and choose thy ground  
And take thy rest."

Death would not spare him for the soldier's grave he



**Lord Byron**  
**From the portrait by T Phillips, R. A.**



coveted. He was stricken with illness before he could take the field, and died at Missolonghi, April 19, 1824. In his delirium he imagined that he was leading his troops at Lepanto, and cried out, "Forward, forward, follow me!" At length, as the last lethargy settled down upon his untamable and restless spirit, he said quietly to his attendant, "Now I shall go to sleep." He did not speak again.

**Byron's Work.** — The life and work of Lord Byron were an immense force not only in the history of England, but throughout Europe. His generation hailed him as the voice of their aspirations and complaints. He uttered for them, in verse of an indomitable and masculine vigor, full of a somewhat declamatory but magnificent rhetoric, their despairs, their unbeliefs; and he shares in both their weakness and their strength. Probably no other English poet ever won such admiration from contemporary Europe; he gave English literature a larger place on the Continent, and "led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage throughout all Europe." But while realizing the importance of Byron in the large movement of democracy as a social and political force, our primary question is rather as to the permanence and value of his contribution to literature. The world has moved rapidly away from the thoughts and tastes of Byron and of his day, but it is the distinction of the great poets to express not their own time merely, but that which is common to all times. Has Byron done this? Even when judged by the most liberal standards, it must be admitted that Byron's poetry does not possess in any great measure a high excellence of style. He is dashing, brilliant, unequal, effective, but careless of finish and detail even to an occasional slip in grammar. The movement of his verse is nervous, strong,

and free, but Shelley surpasses him in subtle lyrical quality, and in his inspired instinct for the aptest word. Yet we forget these shortcomings in his immense vitality and ease; and when fairly caught in the rapids of his eloquence, we are borne along by the power of the orator joined to the power of the poet. He has a feeling for large results; his descriptions are bold, broad, and telling, and the historic past of Europe lives in his swelling lines. He is the poet of the mountain-peak, the sea, and the tempest. A contempt for his fellow-men mingles curiously with his love of Nature and her solitudes. Unlike Wordsworth, he does not efface himself in her presence, but finds a congenial spirit in her moods of fierceness and of power.

**His Egotism.** — For the rest, Byron's life and work are the memorial of his imperious and colossal egotism. Napoleon would have made the world minister to his lust of power; Byron to his lust of pleasure. *I myself would enjoy, yet I suffer*: this is the sum of his arraignment of life. He could create but one type of hero, because he could not escape from the tyranny of his own personality. His heroes never learn of suffering; they stand solitary in the midst of the sufferings of the world, in the egotism of their own woes, sullen and defiant until the last. Moreover, there is in this attitude of Byron's at least a suspicion of insincerity. For Byron's romantic unhappiness and mad dissipations were more conducive to popularity than Wordsworth's placid contentment and sobriety.

**His Conception of Liberty.** — Yet while we may be uncertain as to how much of Byron's demonstrative despair was "playing to the gallery," his devotion to liberty at least was genuine. His faith in freedom glows in his verse, and lends a parting and consecrating radi-

ance to his unhappy life. But his conception of freedom is shallow and unregulated; he confuses it with the license to every man to do what shall seem good in his own eyes. "I have simplified my politics," he writes, "into an utter detestation of all existing governments." His heroes are, for the most part, desperate men, in reckless revolt against the social and moral laws. Haughty, unyielding, self-centered, they are rather the foes to society than its saviors. Selim, in *The Bride of Abydos*, boasts of his love for freedom; but by freedom he means the unchecked license of the buccaneer, free to sail where he will, with a thousand swords ready to destroy at his command. Byron is without a real social faith; impatient to pull down, he is powerless to lay hold on any rational or helpful law of life for himself or for others.

Byron's poetry, however, has many enduring qualities. He had the inner and consuming fire of genius; the very strength and passion of his rebellion against authority, like that of the Titans of old, will make his struggle memorable. By many a poem, and still more by the superb vitality of many a brilliant passage, he has secured a lasting place among the poets of his country.

## PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

Shelley stands with Byron as a poet of revolt; but his devotion to liberty is purer, his love for man readier to declare itself in deeds of help and sympathy, his whole life ennobled by loftier and more unselfish aims. Byron's cry is, "I am unhappy;" Shelley's, "The world is unhappy, and I hope to brighten it." In Byron we may see the masculine element of revolt audaciously



questioning earth and heaven, wanting in reverence and in faith, instant to destroy; in Shelley rather a feminine unworldliness, erring through its incapacity to adjust itself to the ways of earth; we see in him a theorist and a dreamer, building in the air his shimmering palaces of clouds until he "falls upon the thorns of life." A friend describes him as "blushing like a girl" at their first meeting, and speaks of his "flushed, feminine, and artless face." Strong yet slender in figure, with sensitive, almost girlish face, with deep-blue poet eyes, and a mass of wavy brown hair, early streaked with gray, Shelley in our imagination moves among other men as one apart. A daring independence of mind distinguished him from the first. It was his nature to accept nothing on the authority of others, but rather to question and prove all things for himself. He dreamed of what the world should be before life had taught him what it was, and in the fervor of his ideals of truth and righteousness, in his "passion for reforming the world," — young and confident, but too often hasty and mistaken, — he found himself misunderstood and at issue with the world. At Eton, where he was sent in 1804, he was solitary, shy, eccentric; he did not join in the cricket or football, and was commonly spoken of by the boys as "Mad Shelley." In his school days, in one of those sudden flashes of prophetic insight that sometimes illuminate the spirit in early youth, his ideal of life came to him with strange distinctness. He tells us how he then made this resolve, weeping:

"I will be wise,  
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power; for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise  
Without reproach or check."

To a temperament so ardent, lofty, and ill-fitted for conformity to the routine thought and usage of ordinary men, life was certain to prove but a hard matter at best, and Shelley's youth was passed under conditions which, for such a nature as his, were peculiarly unfortunate. His father, Sir Timothy Shelley, a country gentleman in Sussex, was the embodiment of commonplace and prejudiced conservatism; limited and bound by the habits and traditions of his class, it was inherently impossible for him to understand his son's character or tolerate his aims. Shelley's loving and loyal nature made him susceptible to influence, but his fiery zeal and independent temper would not brook authority. His conflict with authority came but too soon. His active mind, prone to doubt and to inquire, hurried him into skepticism, and in 1811 he was expelled from Oxford, which he had entered five months before, for a pamphlet *On the Necessity of Atheism*. Shortly after quitting Oxford, he married Harriet Westbrook, a mere school-girl, who had excited his pity and sympathy, and who was decidedly his inferior in social position. Sir Timothy, who had been seriously provoked by his son's disgrace at Oxford, was naturally incensed anew by this act of folly, and the two young creatures — Shelley was but nineteen and his girl-wife three years younger — were cast adrift. After an interval, a small allowance was granted to them by Sir Timothy and Harriet's father, and they wandered from place to place, Shelley absorbed in his theories, his poetry, and his projects for reclaiming the world. *Queen Mab*, a notable though immature production, was the work of this time, and was privately printed in 1813. Toward the close of the same year Shelley and his wife separated, and after her death in 1816 he married Mary Godwin, who proved

herself more capable than the unfortunate Harriet had been of giving his complex and delicately poised nature the sympathy and help he longed for. William Godwin, Mary Godwin's father, was a theoretical reformer, who preached the peaceable abolition, through the pure force of reason, of law, government, and religion; and Shelley, who had previously felt an enthusiastic admiration for his teachings, was now brought into closer relations with the advocate of these extravagant doctrines.

**Alastor and Other Poems**—Shelley had thus, on the one hand, broken with authority and custom, by his expulsion from Oxford and his breach with his father, and on the other he had surrendered himself, in his impulsiveness and immaturity, to the guidance of a man who expressed the sweeping and unscientific notions of social reform then current among extremists. *Alastor* (1816), Shelley's next poem, in which he describes the lonely wanderings and death of a poet who pursues the unattainable and ideal beauty, discloses to us the springs of Shelley's own nature. Like Marlowe, Shelley was possessed by the "desire for the impossible," and his insatiable and buoyant spirit mounts into regions where we cannot follow. In the nobility of its verse and the beauty of its natural descriptions, *Alastor* shows a great advance in poetic power, and from this time the splendors of Shelley's genius steadily disclose themselves.

In his next poem, *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), he poured out those hopes for the regeneration of the world which are a vital force in his life and poetry. Shelley was less blindly destructive, less hopeless, than Byron. He saw that the disappointment which succeeded the failure of the French Revolution had "unconsciously found relief only in the wilful exaggeration

of its own despair," and he wrote *The Revolt of Islam* in the belief that men were "emerging from their trance." His hero, Laon, is not, like Byron's heroes, lost in selfish gloom, but a poet-prophet, aspiring after excellence, who falls a willing martyr to his love for men. In contrast to Byron's chaotic despondency, the poem strikes anew the note of hope and prophecy; it proclaims a social faith. Mankind is to be saved by Love, and in the poem, "Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world." The whole poet-world of Shelley is transfigured and glorious in the radiance of this faith. The doctrine of *The Revolt of Islam* was but repeated in one of the noblest of his poems, the lyrical drama of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). So in the closing chorus of *Hellas* (1822), a drama inspired by the Greek war for independence, the poet's vision sees in the coming Golden Age the return of "Saturn and of Love."

"Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,  
But votive tears and symbol flowers."

In spite of his professed opinions, Shelley is in this poem one of the most intensely Christian of English poets. In Mrs. Shelley's words, he had "an exceeding faith in the spirit of Christianity," and he went about among men the embodiment of love and pity, the helper of the helpless and the poor.

**Rapid Development. Death.** — In 1818 Shelley left for the Continent, traveling and writing among the most beautiful scenes. The brief space between 1818 and his untimely death in 1822 is the period of Shelley's greatest work. Year by year the fullness of his genius was revealing itself. He had learned of life and of suffering; his faith was deepening, his mind maturing

through experience and incessant study. He was becoming a more consummate master of his art. But English poetry was to suffer a sudden and irreparable loss. In 1822, while sailing on the Gulf of Leghorn, Shelley was caught in a squall off the Via Reggia and perished. So swiftly and so terribly did that breath of the Eternal, whose might he had invoked in song, descend upon him.

**His Poetry.** — When we consider the brevity of Shelley's life, and the greatness of the problems with which he struggled, we wonder that he achieved so much. In his thirty years of life he sought to give the world a message of peace and hope; he wrote lyrics — such as *To a Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind*, and *The Indian Serenade* — which are unsurpassed in English poetry; and he composed two poetical dramas, *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, which approach the dignity, maturity, and dramatic intensity of the masterpieces of classic art. However immature, or ineffective, or non-conforming his opinions may seem, we must recognize the excellence and the power of his imaginative faculty. As a creator of pure poetry, as one who could weave tissues of light and color as delicate as those of a summer dawn — Shelley is an unrivaled master. His poetry, too, is inspired by a pure and exalted passion. And we must remember that, in the words of his own tribute to Keats, Shelley was one of "The inheritors of unfulfilled renown." Byron, we feel, had burnt himself out; when he died he had said all he could have said to the world. But Shelley was cut off before the full and perfect flower of his genius had bloomed.

## JOHN KEATS

(1795-1821)

**Keats, Byron, and Shelley.** — The inclination to associate Keats with Byron and Shelley, his contemporaries in poetry, is natural, but in many ways misleading. It is true that the three poets were not far apart in age, and that none of them lived to be old. It is true that each in his own way expressed some phase or quality of youth; Byron, its ungoverned passions and ill-considered despairs; Shelley, its generous, if visionary, aspirations; Keats, its freshness of unquestioning enjoyment, its undulled and exquisite sensibility to the beauty of the things of sense. But the points of difference between Keats and the older members of the group greatly exceed these more accidental or external marks of resemblance. Keats was entirely apart from the democratic and revolutionary movement to which Byron and Shelley belonged. Those kindred impulses, the pity for human suffering and the "passion for reforming the world," which had been a growing inspiration and power in English poetry from Thomson to Shelley, are absolutely alien to the poetry of Keats. His genius draws its nourishment from widely different sources, and to understand his relation to literary history we must approach him as the bringer of a fresh impulse into English poetry, the force of which is not yet spent.

**Life.** — Byron and Shelley, the poets of democracy, were representatives of the aristocratic class; Keats was the son of the head hostler in a livery stable at Moorfields, London. The poet's father, Thomas Keats, had married the daughter of his employer, and succeeded

to the management of the business at the Swan and Hoop. There John, the eldest child, was born, October 31, 1795. As a boy he appears to have been at first chiefly remarkable for beauty of face, courage, and pugnacity. When about seven or eight years old he was sent to a school at Enfield, a small town some ten miles north of London. Here fighting — according to one of his schoolfellows — was “meat and drink to him.” He is described as violent and generous, as “always in extremes,” “in passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter.” During the earlier part of his school days, Keats seemed destined for military success rather than for distinction as a poet; but when he was about thirteen the passion for study took possession of him, and he read with as much intensity as he had fought. He knew no Greek, and in Latin his classical attainments extended no further than the *Æneid*, yet he found out a way to Greek mythology through the pages of several handbooks in English. In this introduction to literature Keats had the benefit of the friendship of Charles Cowden Clarke, the son of the head-master and a young man of decided literary tastes.

**Spenser's Influence.** — During these years at Enfield, Keats lost his father and mother, and in 1810, when he was but fifteen, his guardian took him from school and apprenticed him to a surgeon at Edmonton. As this town is but a few miles from Enfield, Keats was able to keep up his intimacy with the Clarkes. The influence of Charles Clarke on Keats thus continued uninterrupted. The two friends read together, and discussed their favorite poets, and, through Clarke, Keats found a new world of delight in the poetry of Spenser. There is a close affinity between the genius of Spenser and that

of Keats, and in reading the *Faërie Queene*, the younger poet, with his beauty-loving and romantic nature, must have felt that he had come into his inheritance. Clarke says that he went "ramping" through the poem "as a young horse would through a spring meadow." It seems to have been this pure enjoyment of Spenser's poetry that first stirred in Keats the desire to write.

**Settles in London.** — At eighteen Keats had thus gained access to those two enchanted regions — the world of Greek mythology and the world of medieval romance — which were to give their especial coloring to much of his greatest work. In 1814 he came up to London, and continued his study of medicine in the London hospitals. He seems to have acquitted himself creditably in his professional duties, but the whole force of his nature went out more and more toward poetry, which rapidly became his one absorbing passion. Through Clarke, who had also settled in London, he read the translation of Homer by the Elizabethan poet, George Chapman, and celebrated his conquest of this new kingdom for his imagination in a sonnet which is one of the first revelations of the extent of his poetic power.

**Leigh Hunt.** — Soon after, he met Leigh Hunt, and began a friendship which was to exercise an important influence on his career. Hunt, who was about ten years Keats' senior, was an amiable but somewhat volatile and superficial man, with a fine feeling for the beauty of a poetic phrase, but no great strength or creative power. His poetry, while sometimes pleasing, had a tendency to mere prettiness, and was too apt to sink into a colloquial familiarity which he mistook for ease, but which was beneath the dignity of art. His literary essays were graceful and appreciative. Hunt



was the head of what was derisively called the "Cockney School." He had aroused the bitter antagonism of the great Tory periodicals, *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *London Quarterly*, by the position he had taken in politics as well as in literature, for circumstances had made him a hero of the young Liberals. When Keats came to London, Hunt was in prison, in consequence of certain unflattering comments on the Prince of Wales. After softening his captivity by procuring a flowered wallpaper and by much reading of Spenser and the Italian poets, Hunt became, to Liberals, a martyr to liberty, and to Tories an object of attack. He had, moreover, aroused the opposition of the Edinburgh critics by an attack on the poetry of Wordsworth and of Scott. By becoming a poetic disciple of Hunt, Keats consequently laid himself open to castigation from two of the leading critical periodicals of the day.

**Endymion and Its Critics.** — The publication of his long poem of *Endymion* in the year following brought down upon the new adherent of the "Cockney School" the brutal abuse of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's*, or, as a great writer called it, "Blackguard's Magazine." We know now that the injustice and cruelty of these attacks were not the cause of Keats' early death, that Shelley was mistaken when he called the reviewers murderers, and Byron when he said that the poet of *Endymion* had been "snuffed out by an article." Indeed, after the first shock, Keats showed a real restraint and manliness. "Praise or blame," he declared, "has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. . . . I never was afraid of failure; for I would sooner fail than not be among the greatest." Keats himself spoke of *Endymion* as a "feverish attempt rather than

a deed accomplished;" and while it gives abundant evidence of high poetic power, it lacks the sustained excellence and the fine restraint which are found in the greatest works. Not only was the poem a failure in the eyes of the hostile critics: Keats had failed to express in it the best that was in him.

**Rapid Development.** — Keats was twenty-three when *Endymion* was published; he was not twenty-six when he died. Yet in the three years that remained for him, darkened toward the end by mental and physical sufferings, he won a lasting place among the poets of England. It is not the precocity of Keats that surprises us; it is the rapidity of his poetic development. He passes at one stride from the relaxing and mawkish strain so frequent in the earlier poems, and from the "indistinct profusion" of *Endymion*, to such highly wrought artistic masterpieces as *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. It argues well for Keats' manliness and for his whole-souled devotion to his art, that, in the face of hostile criticism, his genius could thus suddenly and triumphantly assert itself.

At this time (1818), a rival passion began to take its place beside Keats' love of poetry. He met Miss Fanny Brawne, and his first feelings of mingled attraction and disapproval gave way to a violent infatuation. It is a feverish and, on Keats' side, a pitiable love story, and carries us rapidly to a tragic ending. Signs of ill-health had before this begun to show themselves, the chances of any immediate recognition as a poet were most slight, and to Keats' excitable and jealous temperament, love meant tumult and too often torment. He held to his work, but the uncertainties and vexations of his position preyed upon him. "I shall be able to do nothing,"

he writes. "I should like to cast the die for love or death." A few months later (February, 1820), consumption declared itself, and from the first Keats had no hope of his own recovery. In the same year he collected and published most of the poems which he had written since the appearance of *Endymion*, and on these poems his fame chiefly rests. In the fall of 1820 it became evident that Keats could not survive another winter in England, and in September he sailed for Naples. He lingered for a short time in what he called bitterly a "posthumous existence," and died in Rome, February 23, 1821.

**His Love of Beauty.** — The moving principle of Keats' life and poetry is the worship of beauty. Somehow there had been lodged in this son of a London hostler a seemingly miraculous power to know and love beauty, and to embody this fine perception of it in a beautiful form. To him the exercise of this power to perceive and to create beauty was the supreme, almost the sole, interest. It took the place of a religion. The first articles of his creed remain for us in two familiar passages; in his conviction that

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever,"

and that beauty and truth are one. We may add to these his prose statement that "with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration," and we may recall further his significant words to Miss Brawne, "Why may I not speak of your Beauty, since without that I could never have lov'd you?"

The delight in beauty in its outward manifestations depends partly on the soul and partly on the senses. Physically, Keats was endowed with so fine and

pleasure-loving an organization that his senses as well as his soul were delicately responsive to outward impressions. "The glitter of the sea," says Haydon, "*seemed to make his nature tremble.*" He luxuriates in sensations, he goes into raptures over the taste of claret or of fruit. In his work he communicates something of his keener susceptibility to our duller and more phlegmatic senses. That wonder of romance, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, for instance, is a poem of sensuous impressions. We are made to feel the aching cold, or the "poppied warmth of sleep;" to hear the resonance of the silver trumpets, or the pattering of the "flawblown sleet;" to see the "carvèd angels, ever eager-eyed;" to taste the jellies "soother than the creamy curd." It is a poem of contrasts: the radiance of light and color, the storm and darkness; the palsied crone and the ancient beadsman, beside the absorbing happiness and ecstasy of love and youth.

**As a Master of Form.** — This same sensitiveness to beauty declares itself in the almost unrivaled felicity of phrase in Keats' best work. So rich are his best poems in this magical quality — as, for instance, his finest odes — that we linger over them, held by pure delight in the perfection of the phrase. This full felicity of expression, perhaps Keats' greatest distinction as a poet, is the quality he seems to have admired most in the poetry of others. As a boy he had gone into raptures over the epithet "sea-shouldering whales;" and in the numerous allusions to the works of his favorite poets which are scattered through his letters, his enthusiasm is always for the phrase, never, or rarely, for the idea.

With this openness of nature to beautiful impressions and this felicity of phrase, Keats luxuriated in two great realms of beauty — the world of the classic Greek, and the world of the medieval romance. His fellowship

with the one has given us such poems as *Hyperion* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*; his fellowship with the other, *St. Agnes' Eve* and *La Belle Dame sans Merci*.

**His Place as a Poet.** — That Keats was an inspired interpreter of beauty; that he has enriched the literature with poems which, though few in number, possess a fascination of their own, these things are beyond question. Yet after this is freely recognized, the place which Keats holds among the great poets of England remains still undetermined. Our feeling on this matter will depend largely upon our ideal of poetry and our convictions as to its true aims. If we believe that the highest function of the poet is to give pleasure through the creation of a beauty that appeals primarily to the senses, the poetry of Keats will come near to realizing our ideal. If, on the other hand, we believe that the highest and truest poetry, while possessing this beauty, adds to it a beauty more purely spiritual, a teaching and uplifting power, and an element of thought, we shall find Keats' poetry distinctly insufficient for our highest moods. Supreme in one province, he is grievously lacking in the highest aspirations, in spirituality, and in the ardor for right and truth. Apparently devoid of a religious sense, his perception of beauty grows less sensitive as beauty becomes less physical and more abstract. Back of the work of the greatest poets we recognize tremendous force which comes from the whole mind and nature of the man. Keats' poetry, beautiful within its limits, is circumscribed by the serious limitations of Keats himself.

**His Poetic Limitations.** — It is possible that the shortcomings of Keats are the result of immaturity, and that, had he lived, his genius would have declared itself in other ways. What he might have done is matter for

conjecture; but we know that his later poems are not immature but highly finished, and it is clear that his advance toward a poetry of moral and philosophic thought would only have been gained by a radical change in his views of poetry, and by not so much a growth as a total making over of the man himself. Judging him by what he has done, we are constrained; unless we adopt his views of poetry, to admire with certain reservations. His poetry is the song of the Sirens. It is weakened by a strain of effeminacy; and its atmosphere, often heavy as with sweet and cloying odors, is deliciously relaxing. We miss in it the manly vigor of those mountain heights where, as in Wordsworth or Shelley, the air is pure and clear. We should lose much were we unable to yield ourselves to that spell of warm and abundant loveliness of which Keats is master, but if we rejoice in the life-giving air that blows on the high altitudes of poetry, we will not drift into that unthinking or wholesale adulation in which lovers of Keats are apt to indulge. The motto from his master Spenser which Keats prefixed to *Endymion* is the index to the spirit of all his work; it expresses Keats' ideal, but we may question whether that ideal is the highest:

“What more felicity can fall to creature  
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?”

IMPORTANT DATES

George II. ....	1727–1745
Social and Political changes.	
Methodists appear in London .....	1738
William Pitt virtually at the head of the government .....	1757
Clive's victory at Plassey in India	Expansion { of { England {
Wolfe's victory at Quebec in Canada	
Captain Cook explores Australia	
	1757
	1759
	1770

## 368 BEGINNING OF MODERN LITERATURE

### Early romantic works.

ALLAN RAMSAY'S <i>Gentle Shepherd</i> . . . . .	1725
JAMES THOMSON'S <i>The Seasons</i> . . . . .	1726-1730
WILLIAM COLLINS' <i>Odes</i> . . . . .	1746
THOMAS GRAY'S <i>Elegy in a Country Churchyard</i> . . . . .	1751
DAVID GARRICK plays Shakespeare's plays in London . . . .	1741-1776
SAMUEL JOHNSON, "The Great Cham of Literature" . . . .	1709-1784
<i>Dictionary of the English Language</i> . . . . .	1755
<i>Lives of the Poets</i> . . . . .	1779-1781
OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S <i>Deserted Village</i> . . . . .	1770
George III. . . . .	1760-1820
Watt invents the steam-engine . . . . .	1765
EDMUND BURKE'S <i>Speech on Conciliation with America</i> . . . .	1775
American Declaration of Independence . . . . .	1776

### Later eighteenth-century romantic writers.

WILLIAM COWPER, <i>The Task</i> . . . . .	1785
ROBERT BURNS, <i>Poems</i> . . . . .	1786
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH . . . . .	1770-1850
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE . . . . .	1772-1834
Wordsworth and Coleridge publish <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> . . . . .	1798

### Early nineteenth-century romantic writers.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, <i>The Lay of the Last Minstrel</i> . . . . .	1805
The Waverley novels. . . . .	1814-1831
LORD BYRON, <i>Childe Harold's Pilgrimage</i> . . . . .	1812-1818
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, <i>Poems</i> . . . . .	1813-1822
JOHN KEATS, <i>Poems</i> . . . . .	1817-1820

### Prose-writers.

CHARLES LAMB'S <i>Essays of Elia</i> . . . . .	1822-1833
THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S <i>Confessions of an English Opium</i> <i>Eater</i> . . . . .	1821

## FOREIGN DATES

### Revolutionary writers.

Voltaire . . . . .	1694-1778
J. J. Rousseau . . . . .	1712-1778
The French Revolution . . . . .	1789-1795
The Reign of Terror . . . . .	1793-1794
Battle of Trafalgar, defeat of French fleet by Nelson . . . . .	1805
Battle of Waterloo, final defeat of Napoleon . . . . .	1815

## CHAPTER II

### THE VICTORIAN AGE

THE year 1832, which saw the death of Sir Walter Scott and the beginning of a more democratic system of government by the passage of a law known as the first *Reform Bill*, may be taken as a convenient date for the beginning of the Victorian age. Queen Victoria, it is true, did not come to the throne until a few years later (1837), but it will help us to understand the remarkable era which bears her name, if we begin our study of it a short time before her reign actually began.

This period, from 1832 to 1901, was above all a time of sudden and startling changes. In the Victorian age, Englishmen, whether rich or poor, educated or ignorant, were giving up old ways of living and thinking, and adopting new. These sweeping changes, which altered the daily life in almost every household, affected different men in very different ways. Many were filled with hope and exaltation, believing that a new and better age was at hand; some clung desperately to the old ways, and looked at the new with distrust and gloomy forebodings. Still others, bewildered and doubtful, drifted helplessly, uncertain what to do or to believe. This effort of the nation to adjust itself to new conditions, made the Victorian era a time of conflicting opinion, uncertainty, and unrest.

Many things may have combined to bring about this wide-spread passion for change, but two only need be



mentioned here. Two forces, above all others, were driving England forward on her course:

1. *The advance of Democracy*, with the spread of popular education and the great increase in the number of readers, which naturally accompanied it.

2. *The advance of Science*, with all those changes in the belief and in the daily life of the people which it brought about.

With these two motive-forces of the time, we may associate a third great feature of the reign of a different character:

3. *The growth in the extent and importance of the British Empire*, or, as it is often called, "The Expansion of England."

These three important factors in Victorian England were not altogether new things; they began to affect English life during the latter half of the preceding century. Nor were they separate or independent; all three worked together and combined to push the nation on new paths. For the sake of clearness, however, we shall consider them separately.

**1. The Advance of Democracy.** — During the Victorian era the people gained more and more power until before its close they took an important part in governing the nation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, England, although a monarchy in name, was really governed by neither the King nor the common people, but by the large landowners, or *landed gentry*, as they were called, — the men of the upper classes. The franchise, or the right to vote, was confined to comparatively few, and even the few among the poorer classes who could vote, were generally tenants of some large landowner, and were expected to vote as he should direct.

The members of the House of Commons were consequently not the free choice of the people, and they represented a limited class, and not the voters as a whole. As a natural result of this, the landed gentry, the privileged class, held most of the government offices, and the interests of the people were often disregarded by Parliament. This state of affairs was completely changed by the passage of three *Reform Bills*, the first (already mentioned) in 1832, the second in 1867, and the third, in 1884. By these three acts a larger and larger number were given the right to vote, until now, while it has a king, there is probably as much freedom in England as in any country on earth.

The influences of this tremendous change, which we may think of as a peaceable and legal revolution, were felt in many directions. The rise of the people in power and importance has helped gradually to lessen the distance between one class and another, to better the conditions of the laborer, especially the workers in mines and factories, and to give increased opportunities for popular education. The number of readers, which had been growing since the days of Addison and Defoe, was now rapidly and wonderfully increased. Education, like political power, was no longer largely confined to a single class. A great many cheap books were published; many newspapers were established throughout the country; penny magazines and cheap encyclopedias were started to meet the popular needs. The introduction of the railroad and the telegraph, which brought the country close to the town and broke up the provincial stagnation of the remote districts, contributed to the same result. There were some, perhaps there were many, who felt the importance of popular education. As early as 1828 Lord Brougham, a famous statesman,

had declared "*The schoolmaster is abroad*, and I trust to him armed with his primer against the soldier in his military array."

**2. The Advance of Science.**—While political power was thus quietly passing from the favored few into the hands of the people, scientific inventions were revolutionizing the everyday life of England, and scientific theories were changing men's old ideas about the world. This change in the ordinary life of a people so fond of old ways as the English is one of the most remarkable facts in their history. We all know the general nature of this change, but we are so accustomed to modern machinery, to the railroad, the telegraph, the telephone, and the countless other inventions of modern times, that we find it hard to imagine how people lived without them, or to notice how recent they are. In the early part of the nineteenth century the streets of London were dimly lit by oil lamps, a method instituted during the reign of Charles II. Then London had no omnibuses, no cabs, and of course no steam cars or street railways. Hackney coaches could be had, but people still often went from place to place by way of the Thames, as they did in Shakespeare's day, and "watermen still stood at the different 'stairs' (or wharves) which led past the narrow streets to the river." Longer journeys were still made by coach, and ten or twelve miles an hour was considered a reckless and an almost incredible speed. So late as 1830, although new methods of transportation were coming into use, "the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads; the great roadside inns were still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling faces of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers; the mail still announced itself by the merry notes of the horn; the hedge-cutter

or the rick-thatcher might still know the exact hour by the unfailing yet otherwise meteoric apparition of the pea-green Tally-ho or the yellow Independent; and elderly gentlemen in pony chaises, had not yet ceased to remark that times were finely changed since they used to see the pack-horses and hear the tinkling of their bells on this very highway."

In these days before the railroad and the telegraph, while village or country life was often narrow, prejudiced, and monotonous, it was free from outside distractions. The restricted life of the village in this bygone age, when men dozed on in the old ways, hating change, is thus described by Tennyson in his poem of *Aylmer's Field*:

"A land of hops and poppy-mingled corn,  
Little about it stirring save a brook!  
A sleepy land, where under the same wheel  
The same old rut would deepen year by year;  
When almost all the village had one name;  
When Aylmer followed Aylmer at the Hall  
And Averill Averill at the Rectory  
Thrice over."

Science and democracy, new inventions, new industries, and new thought had changed all this before the reign of Queen Victoria was over. After some years of experimenting, the steam-engine began to take the place of the coach; in 1830 the Liverpool and Manchester Railroad went into operation, and six or seven years later England entered upon a great era of railroad building. The first electric telegraph in England was put in operation in 1837, the year of Victoria's accession, and steam communication with the United States was begun in the following year. The effect of such changes upon England has been thus summed up by

one of the great writers of the Victorian age: "Under the benignant influence of peace and liberty, science has flourished, and has been applied to practical purposes on a scale never before known. The consequence is that a change to which the history of the old world furnishes no parallel has taken place in our country. Could the England of 1685 be, by some magical process, set before our eyes, we should not know one landscape in a hundred or one building in ten thousand. The country gentleman would not recognize his own fields. The inhabitant of the town would not recognize his own street. Everything has been changed but the great features of nature, and a few massive and durable works of human art."

**Science and Belief.** — Besides changing men's way of living by its many inventions, science, by its investigations of the world of nature, was changing the old ideas about the physical universe. As the number of thoughtful readers was much greater than it had ever been before, these new scientific theories entered into or affected the popular thought and imagination even more quickly and powerfully than the announcement of the Copernican theory had done in the sixteenth century. Geology showed that the earth was much older than man had believed, and that the life of our race, instead of extending over a period of some six thousand years, stretched back through the past for countless ages. The thought of the insignificance of our earth, in the midst of the lonely vastness of space, profoundly affected the imagination, and found a voice in the poetry of the time. Above all, *the theory of evolution*, which held that life as it now exists on the earth had been slowly *evolved* or developed out of lower or simpler forms, roused a storm of controversy, and

brought many face to face with the deepest questions of belief. These new theories and discoveries did not affect the student of science alone, they became a general topic of study or discussion; they stirred old doubts, they brought again to men's lips the old question:

“Ah me, ah me, whence are we or what are we?  
In what scene the actors or spectators?”

**3. The Growth of the British Empire.** — Lastly, in trying to understand some of the chief characteristics of the Victorian era, we must not forget the growth of England's power and influence, in regions far beyond the geographical limits of the British Isles. The growth of the British Empire has been a great fact in the history of England, as the growth of the Roman Empire was in the history of Rome. Since the middle of the eighteenth century this widening of the sphere of English influence has been particularly marked. “The two great wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France brought back to England a colonial supremacy wider than that ever dreamed of by Pitt,” and the Victorian era saw this colonial supremacy not merely maintained but materially increased. A terrible mutiny of the natives in India against the English in 1857 was stamped out; and in the years that followed, the British power was more firmly established than ever, and the extent of English territory in the East was increased. The English in the scattered settlements in Australia built up, with marvelous vigor and enterprise, a great and wealthy state. In the year before the Queen's death, these flourishing colonies were federated under the name of the Australian Commonwealth. In Africa, we find, under different conditions, the same spectacle

of England's widening power, until, at the close of the Queen's reign, the war with the Boers enlarged still further the boundaries of the British Empire.

**The Era in Literature.** — The excitement, doubt, and controversy that marked this era of unrest found an utterance in Victorian literature and did much to give it a distinctive character. In reading many of the great writers of the time we feel that England has grown older, sadder, more heavily laden with the weight of world-wide responsibilities and heavy cares. The poetry of the time is filled with perplexity, trouble, and many complainings. Many of the novel writers, not content with telling a story for the story's sake, as Scott was, set themselves to reform abuses through fiction, or attempted to solve some of the social or religious questions that tormented their time. The childlike joyousness of Chaucer's England, the young energy of Shakespeare's, the shallow flippancy of Pope's, all these had passed, to be succeeded by the England of Arnold's magnificent and melancholy lines:

"The weary Titan, with deaf  
Ears and labour-dimmed eyes.

. . . . .

Bearing on shoulders immense,  
Atlantean, the load  
Well-nigh not to be borne,  
Of the too vast orb of her fate."

**The New Writers.** — From about 1832 new writers began to present and interpret those changes which were transforming the life and thought of England. The time was a particularly favorable one for a fresh inspiration. Keats, Shelley, and Byron, the three youthful predecessors of Tennyson, all died between

1821 and 1824. Scott, the master of romance, and Crabbe, the poet of the poor, died in 1832; Coleridge and Lamb two years later. Wordsworth, indeed, lived on to the middle of the century, but by 1832 his best work was done. On the whole there was a pause in the higher literature of England, as though the genius of the nation were gathering strength for a new effort.

Then the teachers of the new age appeared in quick succession, taking up the work their great predecessors had just laid down. Carlyle began his literary career in 1824, the year of Byron's death; Macaulay, in 1825; Elizabeth Barrett (afterward Mrs. Browning) published a book of youthful verse in 1826, while some juvenile verses by Tennyson appeared in 1827. The definite beginning of Tennyson's career as a poet, however, dates from the publication of his *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, in 1830, and within ten years from that date, Robert Browning, Dickens, Thackeray, and Ruskin had begun their work. As we study these representative writers of the Victorian age, viewing them so far as we can in their relation to the time, the meaning of that age, and the effect of its changes and problems on literature, will become more clear.

## THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

(1800-1859)

At the beginning of the Victorian era, England seemed to be entering upon a period of material progress and political reform. The practical and hopeful elements in the life of this time, its confidence in the triumphs of machinery and in the rule of the majority, are represented in Thomas Babington Macaulay, one of the most brilliant and influential writers of his age.



Macaulay was born in 1800 at Rothl y Temple, Leicestershire, but a great part of his childhood was spent in Clapham, a suburb of London on the south side of the Thames. His father, Zachary Macaulay, a man of high character and comfortable fortune, was a prominent opponent of the slave-trade. From a child Macaulay showed a marked love for books. He was, indeed, a born man-of-letters. Before he was eight he was an historian and a poet, the compiler of a *Compendium of Universal History*, and the author of a romantic poem, *The Battle of Cheviot*. From the first he was an insatiable reader, storing up year by year in his marvelous memory that fund of information which he was to use with such effect in after years. His nurse said, "he talked quite like printed books," and his command of language greatly amused his elders. When he was about four, some hot coffee was spilled on him while out visiting with his father. In answer to the compassionate inquiry of his hostess he replied: "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." At Clapham, "he had a little plot of ground at the back of the house, marked out as his own by a row of oyster-shells, which a maid one day threw away as rubbish. He went straight to the drawing-room, where his mother was entertaining some visitors, walked into the circle, and said, very solemnly, 'Cursed be Sally: for it is written, cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark.'"

In 1818 Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself by his brilliancy and readiness in conversation and in the college debates. He also won a prize for an essay on William III, a foretaste of his future success as an historian. After leaving Cambridge, Macaulay studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1826. In the meantime his

father, absorbed in the struggle against the slave-trade, had lost money. Macaulay, who was the eldest son, not only thereupon provided for himself but became the main support of the family. He was hard-working, capable, and practical, and from the first his efforts were rewarded with a well-deserved success. Indeed, Macaulay's conduct at this time shows us a very lovable side of his character. He did more than assume a heavy responsibility, he carried through all that he undertook with cheerfulness and courage, working with that buoyant self-confidence which so often commands success.

**Entrance into Literature.** — While he was still at Cambridge, Macaulay had been one of the contributors to *Knight's Quarterly*. Charles Knight, the founder and editor of this magazine, was prominent among those who were trying to bring literature within the reach of the people, a work in which Macaulay was afterwards to play an important part. Several of Macaulay's early poems — the *Battle of Ivry* among the number — first appeared in this journal, as well as some of his less important ventures in prose.

But, creditable as some of these productions were, Macaulay's extraordinary popularity as a writer really began with his essay on *Milton*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1825. This essay attracted immediate attention. Readers were captivated by the novelty, clearness, and vigor of its style; the new writer was overwhelmed with invitations from persons of distinction, and, like Byron, woke up to find himself famous. The editor too was quick to recognize the worth of his new contributor, and from this time Macaulay began a regular connection with the *Edinburgh* which lasted for many years.

**Social and other Successes.** — Nor were Macaulay's triumphs confined to literature; he had qualities which win success in very different fields. He was one of the most brilliant and entertaining talkers of his day; his nature was kindly and wholesome, and he did not find fault with his time, or predict disaster, but looked with confidence and enthusiasm on the political and social changes which were ushering in a new age. All this helped to make him popular. He liked the world, the world liked him; and full of youth, wit, and high spirits, he was entertained everywhere and was welcomed in the most distinguished society of London.

Macaulay was a statesman as well as an author. In 1830 he entered Parliament. He lacked the depth and sympathy which we find in the greatest orators, but he proved himself a fluent and effective speaker, and he commanded the attention and interest of the House. He was, of course, on the side of "progress," and one of his early speeches was in favor of the passage of the Reform Bill.

In 1833 Macaulay was elected a member of the Supreme Council of India, and in the following year he left England to enter upon his new and important duties. He read incessantly on the voyage, devouring books in "Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, French, and English." After he arrived, he prepared a code of criminal laws for India, which showed his practical judgment and legal ability.

On his return to England in 1838, Macaulay again entered Parliament. He retired from public life in 1847, and gave his remaining years to literature. To the last, his life was happy and full of substantial honors. The popularity of his writings was enormous. In 1857 he was made a peer, under the title of Baron

Macaulay of Rothley. He died in 1859 and was buried in Westminster Abbey near Addison, the great master of popular prose whose work he took up and continued.

**Character and Work.** — The chief traits of Macaulay's character have already been suggested. He had great gifts and he put them to good use. He had an exceptional memory, unusual industry, and a natural power of expression, both in speaking and in writing, which he cultivated with the greatest care. But with all this Macaulay was not a profound thinker, nor a man of strikingly original mind. His abilities were far above those of the average man, but his view of life was very much the same. He is not with those prophets who see visions that others cannot see, and preach doctrines which others cannot understand. He was not ridiculed as Wordsworth was; he did not provoke anger and bewilderment, as Carlyle and Ruskin did in his own generation. On the contrary, he was happily in accord with his time. He thoroughly enjoyed the world and the age in which he found himself; finding it full of substantial comforts and a sensible and rational progress. He was what commonplace people call "practical." To him, the substantial thing is better than the vision, or, to use his own words, "an acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia." Carlyle thought once, as he looked at Macaulay's sturdy, bluff features, with their traces of Scottish origin, "Well, any one can see that you are an honest, good sort of fellow, made out of oatmeal."

Not only has such a disposition a better chance of happiness and worldly success than one more highly spiritual and ideal; it was the glorified commonplaceness of his character which helped to fit Macaulay for his work as a popularizer of history and literature. He

had so much in common with the average man that it was easy for the average man to understand him. We cannot wonder that, living as he did in an age of democracy and progress, Macaulay should have become the great popular educator of his time.

**Lays of Ancient Rome.** — While Macaulay is distinguished principally as an historian and an essayist, he is remembered also as a writer of verse. In the *Battle of Ivry* and in *Lays of Ancient Rome* we find Macaulay's characteristic vigor of movement, and a certain rhetorical swing and brilliancy which have made these poems the pride of the schoolboy from that day to this. They are not poetry of the highest order, but in the wide realm of English literature they have and hold their place.

**Essayist and Historian.** — Macaulay's essays, covering a wide range of subjects, brought history and literature to the people through the pages of the magazines. India came home to them in his *Clive* and *Hastings*; Italy in his *Machiavelli*; England in his *Chatham*; literature in his *Milton* and his *Johnson*. The comparative compactness with which these subjects were handled, the impetuous rush and eloquence of the style, their picturesqueness, richness, their sparkling antithesis, took the public by storm. And Macaulay has still another qualification as a missionary of learning: he was, in Lord Melbourne's neat phrase, "cock-sure of everything." Such confidence hardly indicates power of the finest order, but none the less it is often grateful to untrained minds, which qualification and reservation tend to confuse. As an English writer says, in an admirable bit of criticism on this point: "uninstructed readers like this assurance, as they like a physician who has no doubt upon their case."

The great work of Macaulay's later years was his *History of England from the Accession of James II.* On this task he concentrated all the fullness of his powers, he brought to it a high standard of excellence, an infinite capacity for taking pains, a marvelous style, and the loving labor of a lifetime. More than a century before, Addison had declared that through *The Spectator* he would bring philosophy out of the closet, and make it dwell in clubs and coffee-houses. Macaulay, who is to be associated with Addison as accomplishing a similar work on a far larger scale, wrote before the publication of his *History*, "I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies." The immense sale of his book, absolutely unprecedented in a work of this character, is overwhelming testimony to Macaulay's position as a popularizer of knowledge. "Within a generation of its first appearance," writes his biographer, "upward of one hundred and forty thousand copies of the *History* will have been printed and sold in the United Kingdom alone," while according to Everett no book ever had such a sale in the United States, "except the Bible and one or two school-books of universal use."

We should be careful to estimate the importance of Macaulay's work at its full value; we should appreciate the soundness and manliness of his life and character; we should realize his peculiar significance at a time when literature was becoming more democratic. At the same time we should feel that, great as his gifts were, they were not of the highest order; excellent as his aims were, they were not the loftiest nor the most ideal.

## THOMAS CARLYLE

(1795-1881)

Place the portraits of Macaulay and Carlyle side by side and study the faces of the two men. Macaulay, round-faced, unwrinkled, smooth-shaven, complacent, with a hint of shrewdness and humor, is the embodiment of a prosperous English gentleman and man of the world: Carlyle, with his tumble of iron-gray hair, his shaggy beard, his gaunt face, worn and lined with innumerable wrinkles, his deep-set wonderful eyes, is the inspired peasant, the man on whom sorrow and thought and loneliness have set their mark.

This outward difference between the two men is not accidental; it is but the outward expression of a deeper difference in life and in character. While Macaulay was in comfortable agreement with the material progress of his age, Carlyle stood apart from it, often fiercely attacking the very things that Macaulay admired. When Macaulay visited the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851, in which were gathered the mechanical improvements of the new age, he felt as though he was entering St. Peter's. About the same time, Carlyle wrote that the boasted "New Era," was "by no means the land flowing with milk and honey we were led to expect." Carlyle belonged to no party, no sect; he had the originality and loneliness of genius, and his voice of warning and denunciation stirred and startled the men of his generation, like the voice of some wild prophet from the desert. Carlyle did not prophesy smooth things, nor cry peace when there was no peace. He saw the dangers and miseries of his time rather than what is called its "progress." He

was terribly, tragically, in earnest. By what right do we ask for ease and happiness? "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion!" Do not strive to be happy, try to *do* something, to "produce" something. "Love not pleasure; love God. This is the *Everlasting Yea*,—wherein whoso walks and *works*, it is well with him."

**Life.** — Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, a little village in the Scotch Lowlands, in 1795. The place consisted of but "a single street," down one side of which ran an open brook. Ayrshire is about sixty miles to the northwest, the district which had brought forth another great Scotch peasant, Robert Burns. Across the border, some thirty miles to the south, was Cockermouth, the birthplace of Wordsworth. Carlyle's father was a stone-mason, a stern, upright, and deeply religious man, habitually silent, but capable at times of pithy and vigorous speech. The simple household of the Carlyles was the wholesome, austere, God-fearing home of the Scotch peasant. There was deep family affection, but it did not readily show itself in any outward expression. "An inflexible element of authority," Carlyle wrote, "surrounded us all." So in these early years, Carlyle lived "not a joyful life but a safe and quiet one." His early education did not differ materially from that of many another Scotch boy of his class. He attended the village school, and was then sent to the grammar school at Annan, a small town some eight miles distant. His parents, proud of his ability, were anxious to make him a minister, so at fourteen he entered the University of Edinburgh, having walked the ninety miles that lay between Ecclefechan and the capital. He did not distinguish himself as a student, although he showed an aptitude for mathematics, and he left the University in 1813 without



taking a degree. He afterwards declared that "out of England and Spain ours was the worst of all hitherto discovered Universities," but we must not take Carlyle's humorous exaggeration too literally, as we must remember that his original or independent nature was impatient under the routine of formal or conventional methods.

Carlyle was only eighteen when he left the University; an unformed country boy, knowing little as yet of life or of himself. His true path was not yet clear to him. He tried school-teaching for a few years. He abandoned the religious beliefs of his childhood, and gave up the idea of entering the ministry. In 1818 he settled in Edinburgh and began to study law, but the lectures filled him with weariness and disgust. His health was poor; he slept badly, and already he was depressed and miserable from dyspepsia, his almost lifelong tormentor. Beside the drag and discipline of physical suffering, beside the uncertainty of his future, and the practical problem of making a living, Carlyle had to fight a battle which to him was far more real and vital. His soul was in a torment of doubt; he was by nature truly religious, but doubt "had darkened into unbelief," and his terrible need was to find a faith.

In *Sartor Resartus*, his most self-revealing if not his greatest work, Carlyle has told us the story of these critical years. He has told us how he called out for Truth, though the Heavens should crush him for following her, and how he reached at length the appointed hour of deliverance, when, in a mysterious flash of conversion, he came forth free, independent, defiant. These years made Carlyle what he was. In them he "found himself," and came through stress and suffering to know his faith, his place, and his work.

**Entrance into Literature.** — While Carlyle was in Edinburgh, feeling his way toward his career, he supported himself chiefly by private teaching. After a time he was able to add to his modest income by literary work. He began in an humble way for "bread and butter wages;" contributing several articles to the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, and translating a geometry from the French for £50. He also began to learn German, and this study had an important influence on his life and work. German literature seemed to reveal to him "a new heaven and a new earth," and fortunately for Carlyle this enthusiasm was awakened at a time when there was a growing interest among Englishmen in the great writers of Germany. Carlyle's studies thus fell in with the popular demand, and he became an interpreter of the German philosophers and poets to his contemporaries. In 1822 he contributed an article on *Faust* to the *New Edinburgh Review*; his translation of Goethe's romance *Wilhelm Meister* appeared in 1824; his *Life of Schiller* was published in book form in 1825; and his *Specimens of German Romance*, in 1827. The year before the publication of the book last named he married Miss Jane Welsh, the daughter of a provincial surgeon of good family and considerable local reputation. On her father's death Miss Welsh had inherited a small farm at Craigenputtock, in Dumfriesshire, and there Carlyle and his wife settled, in 1828. The little farmhouse was set solitary in the midst of a somewhat dreary tract of moorland, and here, shut out from the world, Carlyle threw himself at his work with a characteristic intensity. He had left behind him the time of hackwork and translations, and was reaching out toward something that should more truly represent him. He wrote a number

of essays for the *Edinburgh*, among them his unapproachable study of *Burns*; and here he composed *Sartor Resartus*. Much had been lived through to make this book, and into it Carlyle poured what he had gained, in good measure and running over. Carlyle's personality is always present in his writings, but never more strongly than here. Midway in this mortal life, he delivered to us the deepest things that life and suffering had taught him, the essence of his message. In 1833 *Sartor Resartus* began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine*, finding but few readers among a bewildered and indifferent public. In the year following, Carlyle took a decisive step in leaving Craigenputtock and settling in London. There he lived, during the forty-seven years that remained to him, in a house in Chelsea, which became the resort of many distinguished men, and was thought of by many, says Professor Masson, "as the home of the real king of British letters." Up to this time Carlyle's life had been a stubborn fight with poverty. He had won recognition from the discriminating few; but he would write in his own way and no other, and as yet he had gained nothing like a popular recognition. In a few years this was entirely changed. His popularity was begun by the appearance of his *French Revolution*, in 1837. About the same time he gave the first of several courses of lectures, which made his strange, rugged figure and impassioned earnestness familiar to London audiences. He "toiled terribly," bringing forth his great works with indescribable stress and effort. In 1866, shortly after he had fought his way through a mighty task — his *Life of Frederick the Great* — he was made Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh, a post of great honor. At last his own country had honored her prophet, but

the triumph was shattered by the sudden death of Mrs. Carlyle, "for forty years the true and loving help-mate of her husband." Fifteen years longer Carlyle himself lingered on; wandering about the Chelsea Embankment or Battersea Park, living over in an old man's dreams that past which he recorded in his *Reminiscences*. Strength had altogether left him and life was a weariness. He died, February 4, 1881, and was buried, according to his wish, beside his family in the little churchyard at Ecclefechan.

**Works and Character.** — Three qualities in Carlyle's work can hardly fail to impress us, — *originality*, *earnestness*, and *power*; and these three qualities combined to give him an almost unequaled influence upon his time. Men might accept or combat his teachings, they could not disregard them. He made men think; he startled them in the midst of their complacent satisfaction by showing them other aspects of their boasted "progress;" he thundered against some of their most comfortable convictions; he showed them that many a familiar thing which they passed over as commonplace had in it something miraculous and divine. Thus, whether he roused protest or enthusiasm, Carlyle always stirred or stimulated. His very manner of writing — abrupt, exclamatory, touched with grim humor, and highly charged as with some explosive forces — arrested and held the attention of his bewildered readers.

Carlyle wrote a great many books, biographies, histories, literary essays, studies of the social and political questions of his day, but nearly all of his work is suggested by or intended to illustrate a few leading principles or ideas. These principles are the expression of Carlyle's inmost nature; they embody the most

vital things he had learned from life, and, right or wrong, they show us the man himself.

In the first place, we find in Carlyle's work, as in Carlyle himself, a passionate desire to tear away everything that is superficial or misleading, and so lay bare the hidden truth or reality that lies beneath. Men, he held, were continually deceived because they judged merely by the outward appearance, and so he labored to make them look deeper and see things as they really are. This determination to get down to the fundamental reality beneath the surface of all things is the chief motive in *Sartor Resartus* (or the tailor repatched). In this book, Carlyle treats in a fantastic but profoundly serious fashion of "The philosophy of clothes." By "clothes" he means not merely clothing in the ordinary sense, but also all those visible shapes or forms in which the invisible or spiritual manifests itself. "All forms," he says, "whereby spirit manifests itself to sense, whether outwardly or in the imagination, are clothes; man's body is but his 'earthly vesture;' the universe itself, with its manifold production and reproduction, is but the living garment of God." Carlyle wrote in an age of science, when men were busy investigating and explaining the physical, or material, universe; but he regarded the labors of the scientists with an amused contempt. To his eyes, most scientists, with their mechanical theories, are too absorbed in what they call matter. They are so busy with the outward appearance, with the *clothes*, that they forget the underlying reality, which is spirit, or God. The true "force, essence, and reality" is the universal presence and empire of an unspeakable Power, but the modern man talks of "Forces of Nature, Laws of Nature," and does not think of that Power as a divine thing,

“not even as one thing at all, but as a set of things instructive enough, saleable, curious, good for propelling steam-ships. With our sciences and cyclopedias, we are apt to forget the *divineness* in these laboratories of ours.”

**Histories and Biographies.** — This same impatience with whatever seems to him *mechanical*, *formal*, and *superficial* reappears, in a somewhat different form, in Carlyle's view of history. Human institutions, human systems of government, were made by man and are the outward expression of his will. But the vital or essential thing was not the system, it was the will that made, or the man that sustained it. When a system of government, or any institution, no longer does what it was made to do, or means what it once meant, then it is like a body without the spirit, or like worn-out clothes, ready to be cast aside. This is the thought that runs through Carlyle's *French Revolution*. The early kings of France were strong men originally they became kings because they were strong enough to rule. But later, weak men came to sit on the throne, not because they could rule but because their ancestors had been strong. These false kings were shams, and the French Revolution was the terrible protest of the people against them. The sham kings and the sham government lasted a long time, but in the end truth was stronger than falsehood, men were stronger than systems, and the will that long ago had set up kings at last struck them down. The French Revolution thus became to Carlyle a dramatic illustration of the fact that as surely as water rises to its own level, so in the long course of history truth and right will ultimately come to prevail. Had it not taken place, he tells us, he would have despaired of the world; as it

is, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

One other feature of Carlyle's view of history is even more important, if we would understand the purpose and spirit of much of his work. This is the belief that humanity progresses chiefly through the work and leadership of its heroes or great men. These leaders, or heroes, have appeared under many different shapes, or worked in different ways; some of them have been prophets, some poets, some priests, some kings. But they have all been earnest, sincere; and they have guided the course of history. Believing that the few who are wise must guide and rule the many who are foolish, Carlyle had no confidence in democracy, or government by the majority. It is the man, not the system, that must save the state, not "ballot boxes or electoral suffrages," but the true Captain, obedient to the eternal laws of Nature, who can carry the ship round Cape Horn. This is the view of history set forth in Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, and insisted on in many of his other books. Indeed, Carlyle's longer biographies, his lives of *Frederick the Great* and *Cromwell*, are detailed studies of the hero, or strong man.

**Place in his Age.** — We may think that Carlyle's theory of history was unsound, his notion that the world should be governed by its great men unpractical, but there is no doubt that he was one of the greatest moral and spiritual forces of his time. Ruskin looked up to him as his "friend and guide," and his influence is seen in the work of Tennyson and Browning, the greatest poets of the age. The fierce, primitive power in Carlyle, the force that moved men, is shown in an extraordinary style. The power of this style at its best is very different from that which comes from mere

literary skill. With all its strange mannerisms, and apparent affectations, one feels that a strong man is speaking to us out of the depths of his soul, as one man seldom dares to speak to another in this solitary and conventional world. His *French Revolution*, he tells us, "comes direct and flaming from the heart of a living man." He has the power of the poet, as well as the patient industry of the historian, and he can re-create the past, and make it live again before our eyes. He can be savage and terrible, but with all his sternness he has a wonderful gentleness and compassion. "Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever whether thou bear the Royal mantle or the Beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden: and thy bed of Rest is but a grave. Oh, my Brother, my Brother! why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes!"

Carlyle was not faultless. He was often gloomy, morose, irritable over little things, sometimes too absorbed in his work to do his full duty to those about him, but when we look at his life as a whole, when we consider his fearlessness in speaking the truth as he saw it, his power, and the nobility of his aims, we must feel that he was a truly great man. This boy who had played barefoot in the single street of a Scotch village, this son of a stone-mason, became the teacher of two continents. He was honored; yet in an age of science and democracy he was contemptuous of the results of modern science, and distrustful of democracy. In the midst of industrial competition, and the eager haste to be rich, he stood apart — the prophet of the spiritual and the unseen. When we see him clearly as he was, does he not stand before us as one of his own heroes, — a brave, truth-



loving, deep-seeing man, who wrote "without thought of himself what he knew to be needful for the people of his time to hear, if the will to hear were in them."

## JOHN RUSKIN

(1819-1900)

A name frequently associated with Carlyle's is that of John Ruskin, one of the best loved and most ridiculed of men in England. His sympathies were very broad and wide. He loved beauty as did John Keats; he loved Nature as Wordsworth did, from its revelation in earth and sky to its most minute forms in crystals and flowers; and he loved truth and hated shams as cordially as did Carlyle. The love of beauty and the zeal for righteousness were thus vital principles of Ruskin's work. He was the greatest art critic of his generation; the man who did most to help the British public to see and love beauty as revealed in the great works of art; and he was also a great moral and religious teacher, fighting the battle of his time against avarice, vulgar materialism, and unbelief. In Ruskin, the love of beauty and the zeal for righteousness were not separate or conflicting motives, they were inseparably joined. When he wrote of beautiful pictures, of statues, of noble buildings, he saw in them a moral and spiritual significance. When he wrote later, on the social problems of his time, his love of art and beauty entered largely into his effort for their solution.

**His Life.** — John Ruskin was born in London in 1819. His parents were of Scotch origin and from them he inherited his upright character and simple piety. His mother, from his infancy, had "devoted him to God," hoping that he would enter the Church.

As soon as he could read she began a course of Bible study, beginning at Genesis, and going straight through, "hard names and all," and Ruskin says that to this he owed the first cultivation of his ear in sound, and that he considered it the most precious and essential part of his education. His father was a wealthy wine merchant who during the summer traveled through the various counties of England, and into Scotland, on a tour for orders. He traveled leisurely in his own post-chaise, often taking his son with him, and thus Ruskin early learned to know and to love the country. When he was four years old his father moved to Herne Hill, a suburb of London, where Ruskin lived for nearly fifty years. He was a lonely, dreamy boy, having but little companionship, and given to watching the clouds, the flowers, or the ants in his father's garden. When he was twelve years old he was given a copy of Roger's *Italy*, illustrated by the great artist Turner, which he pored over, learning to love the pictures. In *Praeterita* (scenes of his past life) Ruskin tells us how deeply these early impressions influenced his life, which was outwardly rather uneventful.

His education was largely conducted at home and at a small day-school at Peckham. In 1837 he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford. He had already begun to contribute to the *Architectural Magazine*, and in 1839 he won the Newdigate prize for an English poem. Shortly after his graduation from Oxford, he entered the lists, in his *Modern Painters* (1st vol. 1843), as a champion of the artist Turner, who had received at that time but scanty recognition. This work, although the outcome of a desire to vindicate Turner, far outgrew its original intention, and became a setting forth of Ruskin's theory of art. In the spring

of 1840 Ruskin had an illness, and the physicians ordered him to go to Italy and live out-of-doors. This practically ended his Oxford days, although upon his return to England he took a pass degree.

For about twenty years from the publication of the first volume of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin gave his chief energies to the study and criticism of art. *The Stones of Venice*, and the concluding volumes of *Modern Painters*, are among the works of this time. But from about 1860, while Ruskin's deepest interests remained unchanged, his best efforts were given to ethics and social reform. "I am tormented," he wrote, "between the longing for rest and lovely life, and the sense of the terrific call of human crime for resistance, and of human misery for help." Great as this break in Ruskin's life seems, from art to social science, the work of this second period was the logical outcome of the first. For twenty years he had labored for pure art, and he had come to believe that it was idle to preach the love of art and of beauty to a nation whose standards of living were so low, and whose ideals were wealth and worldly success. To promote the cause of art, it seemed necessary to purify the entire social system, and to establish truer and nobler ideals of living. Thus Ruskin was brought, though by a different route, to face the same problems as confronted Carlyle and other thoughtful men of his time. The industrial changes of the last hundred years had brought not only an enormous increase in wealth, but new chances of acquiring it by people of every class. The love of money had become more and more the great temptation of the modern world. In 1871 Ruskin issued the first number of a series of tracts entitled *Fors Clavigera*. They were addressed to working men, and had

for their chief object the formation and promotion of a society called the Guild of St. George, in which practical work should be done towards solving the problems of poverty and crime. This craving to do something practical is the inspiration of "*Fors.*" Ruskin met with a great deal of opposition and a great deal of ridicule, some even going so far as to call him mad. The difficulty was, that he was ahead of his time, and



View of Brantwood, Ruskin's Home, Lake Coniston

like many prophets he met with little encouragement. He practised what he preached, he gave £7000 toward St. George's Guild, he bought land and established farms, he set up mills which should be run largely by hand instead of machinery, he established schools of agriculture and of art.

The last years of Ruskin's life were spent largely at Brantwood, his home on Lake Coniston in the beautiful Lake country. There his energies were chiefly devoted to the cause of social justice. His father

had left him a fortune of £200,000: he gave away eleven-twelfths of this great inheritance, and died in 1900 a comparatively poor man.

**His Work.** — Nothing but a most loving and patient study of his works can give any conception of the beauty of Ruskin's prose style. He has the exquisite sensibility of a landscape painter, joined to a poet's love of language. Take, for instance, his description of the shore of the Bay of Uri, Lake Lucerne: "Steepest there on its western side, the walls of its rocks ascend to heaven. Far in the blue evening, like a great cathedral pavement, lies the lake in its darkness; and you may hear the whisper of innumerable falling waters return from the hollows of the cliff, like the voices of a multitude praying under their breath. From time to time the beat of a wave, slow lifted, where the rocks lean over the black depth, dies heavily as the last note of a requiem. Opposite, green with steep grass, and set with chalet villages, the Fron-Alp rises in one solemn glow of pastoral light and peace; and above, against the clouds of twilight, ghostly on the gray precipice, stand, myriad by myriad, the shadowy armies of the Unterwalden pine." Ruskin's descriptions of Nature affect us not merely because of their magical richness and flow of style, but because to him, as to Wordsworth and Carlyle, the shows of earth and sky are more than any empty pageant, they reveal the soul of God.

**Ideas of Beauty and Art.** — Ruskin believed we are so made that, when we are cultivated, we must delight in beauty and be thankful to its Creator. The apprehension of true beauty is then a test of our nearness to Him whom it expresses and reveals. With these ideas of Nature and beauty, Ruskin's principles of art are naturally connected. Just as the perception

of beauty is a moral attribute, so the interpretation of beauty is likewise moral, the art of a pure soul. Great art implies the union of both powers. On this principle of the foundation of great art in morality, all Ruskin's work as an art critic is built. These ideas of Ruskin's must be firmly grasped, for they are the keynote of both his life and his work.

**Social Reform.** — As Ruskin's first twenty years were given to art, so all the remainder of his life was poured out in his passion for reform. Not that he wished to enter the arena; he loved a life of quiet and contemplation, but the work called and no one else responded. It meant that Ruskin had to leave a chosen and successful career to enter upon one bristling with difficulties, where he met with discouragement, disappointment, and the falling away of friends. Yet he answered to the call of human misery and gave his time, his money, his writing, himself, to the great cause. Whatever we may think of the wisdom or practical value of Ruskin's economic doctrines, we cannot but feel a glow of admiration for the high aims and splendid self-sacrifice of Ruskin himself. In his lifetime Ruskin suffered much from misunderstanding, ridicule, and neglect, but while some of his prominent contemporaries have lost in popular estimation, as the years have gone by, Ruskin's influence has steadily increased and his fame was never higher than now.

**Other Prose-Writers.** — The study of such masters as Macaulay, Carlyle, and Ruskin helps us to realize that the Victorian era was distinctly an age of great prose. In poetry, the age of Victoria must yield the first place to the age of Elizabeth: Tennyson and Browning were indeed great, yet Shakespeare, at least, was greater. But in the province of prose litera-

ture it is different. No Elizabethan prose-writer, not Bacon, nor Hooker, nor Raleigh, equals Ruskin in his command of English prose as an instrument of expression for almost every need; nor do the great prose-writers of any other period, — Addison, Swift, Burke, De Quincey, or Lamb, each admirable in his own way, attain to Ruskin's more comprehensive and varied excellence. Not only does Victorian prose at its best challenge comparison with that of any previous period in the literature; since the days of Addison prose has steadily broadened in range and grown in importance. During this time democracy and popular education were raising up a great host of readers, and these readers, comparatively indifferent to poetry, demanded prose. The enormous mass of printed matter of every description, and of almost every grade of merit, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, books of many kinds, grew in response to this demand. We can speak here of only a few of the most prominent and representative writers, but we must not forget that there were many authors during this time equally, or hardly less, worthy of study. Thus JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801–1890), or CARDINAL NEWMAN, as he is usually called, stands with Carlyle and Ruskin as one of the best prose-writers of his time. As Newman's absorbing interest was in theology and in questions of religious doctrine, he wrote almost entirely on religious topics. So while the influence of his writings was very great in certain directions, it was less wide-spread than that of some of his contemporaries, who wrote on less abstruse and difficult subjects. Newman's characteristic merit as a prose-writer is, that he was able to convey the thought, or create the desired impression, in a wonderfully clear, natural, and effective

way. Easy as this may seem, it is in reality the perfection of art. In reading Newman, we do not forget the idea in our admiration of the beauty of the language; we are not distracted by any sense of effort on the author's part, not irritated by any obvious peculiarities of manner. Newman shows no desire to make us admire him merely because he can say a thing in an eloquent or brilliant way; he is not thinking of himself but of his subject: and for him that style is the best which expresses his meaning most perfectly.

Victorian prose is remarkable for its variety and breadth of interest. In sharp contrast to Cardinal Newman, who seems more like some medieval saint than a modern thinker, were the scientists, men like CHARLES DARWIN (1809-1882) and THOMAS HUXLEY (1825-1895), whose writings stirred the thought and disturbed the religious belief of their time. Then there were scholars, historians, and critics of literature, and an ever increasing multitude of story-writers and novelists. In two departments of prose-writing the Victorian age was especially remarkable. It probably surpassed any other period of English literature in the number and average excellence of its *historical writers*, and (as we shall see shortly) it was even more remarkable for its contributions to the *art of fiction*. One writer, who gained distinction both in poetry and prose, must be considered before we pass on to the Victorian novel. This writer, Matthew Arnold, was not only a poet and the foremost literary critic of his day, he was also a critic of contemporary England, and like Carlyle and Ruskin he faced and strove to remedy, although after a different fashion, the social difficulties of his time.



## MATTHEW ARNOLD

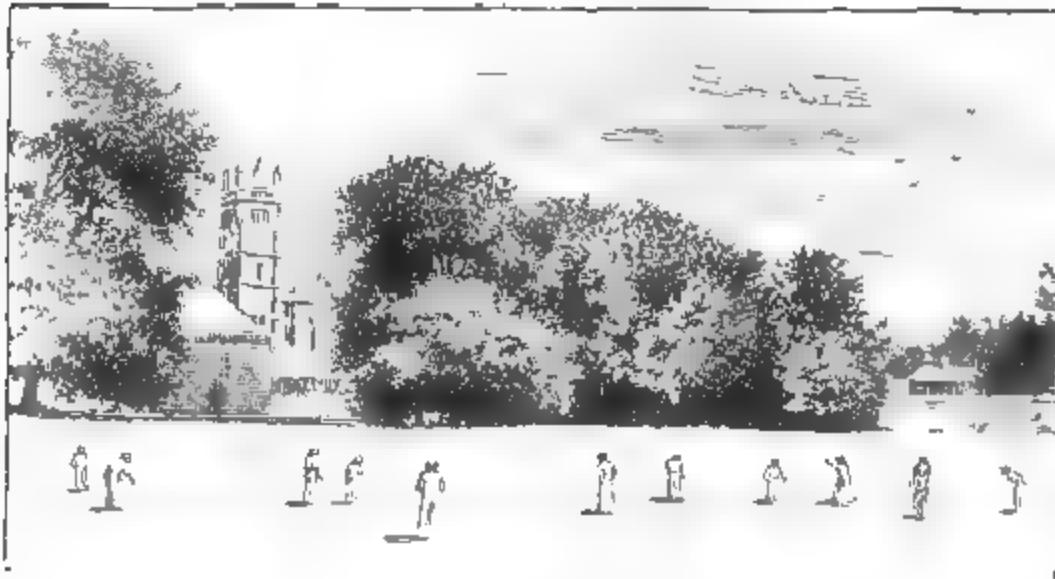
(1822-1888)

Matthew Arnold was born in 1822, at Laleham, a small town in the valley of the Thames above London. He came of a scholarly family and grew up in an atmosphere of books and culture. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, known to all readers of *Tom Brown's School-Days* as the Head-master at Rugby, was a sound classical scholar and the author of a *History of Rome*. His brother, Thomas Arnold, the younger, became an author and teacher; while his niece, MRS. HUMPHRY WARD (Mary A. Arnold), holds a high place among the novelists of our own time. Carlyle's father built bridges, Ruskin's father was an active and successful merchant, but Arnold, born into very different surroundings, belonged to a family in which books and the making of them filled a large place. Besides the early influence of a religious and cultured home, Arnold was regularly and carefully educated. At thirteen he went to Winchester, the oldest and one of the best of the great public schools; two years later he entered Rugby, then under the stimulating rule of his father, the most famous schoolmaster in England. After four years at Rugby, he gained a scholarship and entered Balliol College, Oxford. There was much in the spirit and historic associations of Oxford that appealed profoundly to Arnold's poetic and scholarly nature, and stirred in him an intense love and loyalty. In after years, the thought of Oxford had power to arouse him to an unusual enthusiasm; and in his famous tribute to her he leaves his cool, assured manner, his tone of condescension, lightened by cynicism, and his style has a warmth and tenderness which in his prose is

indeed rare. "Beautiful City! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene:

'There are our young barbarians, all at play!'

And yet steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from



Cricket Green and College Towers, Winchester

her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?"

We can learn much of Arnold himself, as well as of Oxford, from this beautiful passage. Many things in that restless and prosperous age of science and democracy perplexed his mind or offended his taste; and Oxford, the "home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs,"

“unravaged” by the fierce intellectual life about her, seemed to Arnold the last stronghold of the old ideals. There beauty and the old culture fought the age-long battle against the commonplace vulgarity of the unenlightened without the walls. And there were other things in Oxford, besides the charm of the place, and the inspiration of its past, which strongly affected Arnold. He made congenial and brilliant friends; he listened to the impressive sermons of Newman as the great preacher stood “in the dim afternoon light” in the pulpit at St. Mary’s. He heard, too, “other voices in the air,” the voice of Goethe, Carlyle, and Emerson, of the teachers who spoke through books. Happy is the man, he wrote forty years later, who in his youth hears such voices.

Arnold graduated in 1845. He had been highly educated according to the most approved methods, and both by inheritance and by careful training he belonged to the cultured few. Was anything lacking? If so, it was something that Shakespeare, Bunyan, and Burns (none of them scholars, as Arnold was) learned in a bigger and a far rougher school.

After leaving Oxford, Arnold taught for a time at Rugby. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, a prominent statesman, and in 1851 he was made Inspector of Schools. Arnold held this office for thirty-five years, and nothing in his life was finer than the faithfulness and zeal with which he performed its exacting duties. He had a deep interest in education, and great faith in the saving and uplifting power of books, and, as school inspector, he gave his time and strength freely to educational questions, and did not shrink from routine tasks which often must have been wearisome drudgery.

Such time as he could spare from these important but more prosaic duties, Arnold devoted to literature. He could not, like many of his great contemporaries, give his whole life and energy to writing, yet he won a high place in poetry, and he became one of the most distinguished and influential prose-writers of his day. In 1857 he was made professor of poetry at Oxford, a position which has been filled by many distinguished men, and he was re-elected for a second term of five years in 1862. In 1883, and again in 1886, he lectured in the United States. In 1886, after he had resigned his position as Inspector of Schools, he was given a pension by the government "as a public recognition of service to the poetry and literature of England." Two years later he died suddenly of heart disease, and was buried at Laleham, where he had entered upon his laborious and anxious life, sixty-six years before.

**Poet and Critic.** — Arnold's literary career naturally divides itself into two periods: the period of his poetry, and the period of his prose. He wrote the greater part of his poetry before he was thirty-five; after that (while he did not give up writing poetry altogether) he devoted by far the larger part of his time and energy to prose. Thus, his poetry (with the exception of some notable later poems) is the voice of Arnold's youth; his prose, in which he criticizes literature, or discusses the problems of his age, is the expression of his mature views on art and life.

The tone, or spirit, of Arnold's poetry is often very different from that of his prose. His poems, taken as a whole, express his discontent with life, and especially with the life or ideals of his own time. In the midst of the rush and change of Victorian England, Arnold's verse is filled with complaint, regret, and

an intense longing for the tranquil and simple faith of a time gone by. The age, he says, is "a hopeless tangle;" men live too fast, they are too restless and distracted, to see clearly or attain peace. There is no living poet or prophet to guide the bewildered modern world:

"Achilles ponders in his tent,  
The Kings of modern thought are dumb;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come."

Arnold does not fight fiercely against life or the world, as Byron did; he sounds no note of challenge or despair. He would rather have us endure with stoical patience the evils which we can neither remedy nor avert. What, he asks, was accomplished by Byron's passionate outcry? Men have the same griefs still, but

"They contend and cry no more."

Let us not struggle, then, against the inevitable. Let us turn to the world of nature, and watch how all things perform their appointed tasks, not with a "senseless uproar," but in tranquillity and silence. So should man do his work, undistracted and unafraid, dependent on himself, finding strength in his own soul, for

"The fountains of our life are all within."

Arnold delights in showing us human sorrow, only to withdraw our minds from it by leading us to look at the eternal calm of Nature, in the presence of which all the strife and passion of man's brief existence seem small and unimportant.

“We, O Nature, depart,  
Thou survivest us! this,  
This, I know, is the law.  
Thou . . .  
Watchest us, Nature, throughout  
Mild and inscrutably calm.”

Yet, to Arnold's eyes, even Nature is not happy, but rather possessed with a deep, uncomplaining patience. To Wordsworth, Arnold's master in poetry, every flower seemed to enjoy the air it breathed; to Browning, when the earth was filled with the new life of spring, it seemed as though “God renewed his ancient rapture,” and was happy in and through his works. But to Arnold, the hills and rocks and sky, if one could put their life into words,

“Seem to bear rather than rejoice.”

Filled as it is with a quiet and contemplative melancholy, lacking as it is in certain directions, Arnold's poetry has, within its somewhat narrow limits, a nameless but unmistakable charm. It attracts us by its refinement, its delicate beauty, its classical restraint. It reveals the lover of Nature, the critic, the thinker, and above all the man of a fine but exclusive culture. Arnold was not a born *lyric* poet; his verses, that is, have not that free and natural melody which delights us in the best lyrics of Shelley or Burns. Indeed, highly finished and beautiful as Arnold's poetry often is, we feel that it is largely the result of careful training, fine taste, and deliberate art. We miss, in the thin, intellectual atmosphere of Arnold, the force and fire of Byron, the narrative power of Scott, the warm-hearted, human sympathy of Burns. Almost all of

Arnold's poetry is the expression of a single mood, a mood of subdued sadness in which regret and longing mingle with resignation. But in giving poetic utterance to this mood, Arnold was speaking not only for himself but for a great many of his own time. He is the interpreter of those who, in the middle years of the nineteenth century, felt the bitterness of the conflict between the new thought and the old faith. Arnold's poetry expresses the mingled feelings awakened by this time of change. Looking back to the old beliefs with regret, and shrinking from conclusions of the new science which he feels obliged to accept, he describes himself as

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born."

**Prose.**—In his poetry Arnold complained of the "something that infects the world;" he declared that artists were "envious and the mob profane;" in his prose he tried to set the world right. He worked to raise the standards of literary taste, to elevate the world by a deeper and truer culture, and to make "righteousness and the will of God prevail." He was one of the most finished prose masters, and the most influential literary critic of the Victorian age. His prose has none of the impetuous eloquence of Carlyle, nor the varied excellence of Ruskin. It is quiet, beautifully clear, restrained, discriminating, free from the heat and tumult of strong emotions. As a critic of literature Arnold performed a great service. He thought that the English were disposed to be narrow in their opinions, and believed that they should be taught to judge of their literature in a broader way by comparing it with that of other nations. He wrote a number of essays on

foreign writers, of modern and classical times, to encourage this wider view. He insisted on a high standard of excellence in style (believing that the English were stronger in inspiration than in the art of expression), and he laid down certain first principles of literary judgment. Yet in his criticism, as in his poetry, we feel the lack of the deep human sympathy that we find in Thackeray's *Lectures on the English Humourists*, or in Carlyle's *Essay on Burns*. Finally, in *Culture and Anarchy*, and in several later works, Arnold offered his solution of the social problems and religious questions of his time.

While we recognize and admire Arnold's finished scholarship, his fastidious taste, his keen and brilliant intellect, and his culture and refinement, we feel instinctively that he was a smaller man than Ruskin or Carlyle. Books fill a large place in our existence, but life is larger than books. Arnold believed that the world can be saved by *culture*, — "by getting to know the best that has been thought and said in the world," but the really wise man knows that this is the delusion of one who has lived "all his life in a dream of learning, and has never had his sleep broken by a real sense of things."

## THE NOVEL

The development of didactic and critical prose in the Victorian period, which we have partly considered in the works of Macaulay, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Arnold, was a significant and distinctive feature of nineteenth-century literature. But even more important was the growth of the English novel. The great problems of modern society which formed so large a part of the subject-matter of these writers found expression also



in fiction. And if these works, by reason of their brevity or suggestiveness, were a means of popularizing literature and of stirring the public mind to new activity, the novel did even more in extending the spirit of humanity and in bringing literature to thousands of readers whose forebears in the eighteenth century were either entirely innocent of letters or had but little appreciation of literary art. The novel has become in modern times the characteristic medium for the portrayal of life, as the drama was in Shakespeare's time, or as the epic was in Homer's.

The poetry of the nineteenth century was largely subjective or lyrical. Narrative and dramatic verse were slighted; poets were absorbed chiefly in the expression of their own emotions; or, like Shelley, were attempting to solve the problems that confronted them by a reference to the inner promptings of the soul rather than by a study of the actual life about them. The poet's eye was for the most part turned within, and it was left to the novelist to portray the world without. It is in the pages of the novel that the living, moving world of the nineteenth century, in all its absorbing detail, is portrayed and perpetuated. By the power of his sympathy and imagination, the novelist has been able to put himself in the place of others, to identify himself with his characters, to think their thoughts, and therefore to do for our modern life, in large measure, what the dramatist did for the stirring times of Queen Elizabeth.

We have seen that in the novels of the eighteenth century, especially in those of Henry Fielding, the growing spirit of humanity was shown in the portrayal of the life of the lower and middle classes. In the nineteenth century, likewise, this spirit of democracy,

this interest in all conditions of men, intensified and broadened by the events that followed the French Revolution, found its most concrete and vivid expression in the work of the novelists. Sir Walter Scott, as we have seen, while writing historical romances, pictured also the life of his native Scotland, the shrewdness, the humor, and the daily toil of the Scotch peasant. Shortly before the appearance of *Waverley*, JANE AUSTEN (1775–1817) had published *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), the first of her finished and exquisite pictures of the daily domestic life of the middle class. CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819–1875) wrote in 1849 *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet*, the story of a London apprentice who becomes involved in the Chartist agitations. CHARLES DICKENS, drawing upon his own experience in the great metropolis, gives us pictures of the low life of London. THACKERAY, who understood the life of fashionable London as no one has since understood it, paints the society of drawing-room and club, and bares to us the shams of Vanity Fair. GEORGE ELIOT, with her subtle knowledge of the workings of conscience, chooses to write of scenes and characters in the country, where life moves more slowly and where the interests of men are narrower. THOMAS HARDY makes real the village and farm life of old Wessex; and RUDYARD KIPLING, poet and story-teller, interests us in the career of the soldier and sailor, — builders of empire, who have carried the British flag to the corners of the world. The works of most of these writers, while holding the reader's interest by their charm of narrative, and by the rich and crowded life they depict, are at bottom concerned with the problems of our time. Some aimed to correct the abuses that existed in the schools or in the courts of law; some

discussed in this indirect way questions of religion and theology, or treated of various social institutions such as marriage; others sought to improve the relations between employer and employed. Indeed the novel of the Victorian period, like nearly all nineteenth-century literature, was strongly imbued with the spirit of reform. Even this most distinctively objective literary form in modern times was burdened to a large extent with *purpose*. Not even in the novel do we find that abundant and spontaneous joy in life, or in the contemplation of life, which was so rich a possession of Elizabethan literature.

## CHARLES DICKENS

(1812-1870)

Among the novelists of this epoch, Charles Dickens is the most famous, if not the most truthful, chronicler of the life of the outcast and the poor. The circumstances of his birth and training were such as to peculiarly fit him for his future work. His father, John Dickens, was a clerk in the Navy Pay-office, who was confronted with the problem of keeping a large family on a small salary. Evidently he was a man of some literary ability, for at one time he reported for the *Morning Chronicle*. That he was fond of novels is shown by his possessing a small library of some of the most famous. These, the boy Dickens read eagerly, — mastering, among others, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, the novels of Tobias Smollett, and the famous history of *Don Quixote*. For days, he tells us, he would live in imagination the life of the characters in his favorite

stories. Dickens' mother, moreover, was noted for her ability as a teller of stories. So that by early reading and perhaps by inherited tastes the great novelist was unwittingly led into his life-work.

Dickens' experiences outside of the home were from the first an additional preparation. When John Dickens,



Charles Dickens

unable to meet his obligations, was imprisoned for debt, the boy went to work in a blacking factory. Through his father's misfortunes, Dickens became familiar with prison-life, which he afterward portrayed in *Little Dorrit*. In his daily work he came to know the life of men and women in shop and factory, and in his leisure hours he wandered among the streets

and alleys of the great city, impressed by the curious and dramatic aspects of London life. At twelve years of age, when his father's circumstances improved, Dickens was sent to school, but there he remained only three years. He then became a clerk in a barrister's office in Gray's Inn. While there he added to his brief schooling by reading in the British Museum, and, with the idea of becoming a reporter, undertook the study of shorthand. In 1829 he became a law reporter, and two years later, at the age of nineteen, a reporter in the House of Commons. His experience in newspaper work was perhaps the most valuable of his training. Through it he grew familiar with the life of the tenements, police-courts, and taverns. In his travels to and fro, he learned the ways of the road, at a time when the stage-coach and the roadside inn were the glory of England. Thousands of incidents of everyday life were fixed in his memory which later he used in his work, and he was brought into close touch with people of many classes. This, together with his experience in preparing copy with despatch, gave him facility, and, with his natural ingenuity, made possible the marvelous circumstantial development of the scenes of his novels.

In 1836 Dickens began his literary career by publishing *Sketches by Boz*, and by beginning the immortal *Pickwick Papers*. From then until his death he was engaged principally in the writing of sketches, short stories, and novels. In 1842 he visited America, and returned to write his impressions of the new country in *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843). After 1858 he appeared frequently before crowded audiences in England and America as a reader of selections from his own works. On these occasions

Dickens used with splendid effect that dramatic instinct which might have made him a great actor, but which, diverted to other channels, added much to the realism and action of his novels. It was during a series of such readings, while on his second visit to America in 1867-1868, that he overtaxed his strength, and, worn out by the incessant strain of his busy life, brought on his premature death. He died in 1870 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

**His Work.** — With extraordinary vividness, pathos, and humor, Dickens brings before us the life of the middle and lower classes, as he had known it in London or in some of the smaller towns. His world is neither the court nor the country, his heroes neither kings nor shepherds; he shows us the plain people, the workers in shop, counting-house, or factory, the throngs that crowd the city streets, the everyday struggle of our modern world. In this way Dickens is the novelist of nineteenth-century democracy, of the average man. And this everyday life, which to some might seem merely sordid or commonplace, is glorified by Dickens' overflowing kindness and humor. He loves to picture the happiness of some simple household, and to describe such kindly and amiable characters as Tom Pinch and his sister Ruth in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. He shows a wholesome delight in the simple pleasures of his characters, and a keen perception of the lighter and more ludicrous aspects of life, yet, with all his love of fun, he had a profound sympathy with the hardship, squalor, and crime of the low life of London. It was part of his deliberate purpose to portray this misery that he might help to relieve it; and it seems but natural that he who had so bitter an experience in early life should have chosen to let in the sun and air on some of the

shabbier and darker phases of existence; depicting types of many social gradations; obscure respectability, the vagrants and adventurers in the outer circles of society, down, as in *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838), to the pickpocket and the murderer. There is Jo, the London street waif of *Bleak House* (1852-1853), "allers a-movin' on;" Jingle, the gay and voluble impostor of *Pickwick* (1836-1837); and that questionable fraternity, the Birds of Prey, that flit about the dark places of the Thames in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865). These studies of the under-strata of society are the most remarkable instance in nineteenth-century England of the democratic spirit in literature, for Dickens' interest was genuine. He realized that "virtue may be found in the bye-ways of the world," that "it is not incompatible with poverty and even with rags."

As a result of this broad sympathy, Dickens' novels are crowded with characters. On his pages there is the multifarious detail, the variety of incident, that suggest actual life in the crowded portions of our cities. Dickens' powers of observation and his resourcefulness have seldom been equaled. And yet we admit that Dickens falls short of being a great portrayer of character. His is for the most part a world of caricature, peopled not with real living persons, but with eccentricities and oddities, much like those of Ben Jonson's men of "humours." We know his people from some peculiarity of speech or manner, some oft-repeated phrase; they are painted from without; we are rarely enabled to get inside of their lives and look out at the world through their eyes. When he attempts to draw a gentleman or an average mortal distinguished by no special absurdities, the result is apt to be singularly insipid and lifeless. It may also

be admitted that we feel at times, in Dickens, the absence of that atmosphere of refinement which is an unobtrusive but inseparable part of the art of Thackeray.

Yet there is an enduring and characteristic charm in Dickens' work. His descriptions of nature are frequently in a highly poetic tone, and there is in his humor a whimsical and ludicrous extravagance, an irresistible ingenuity in the ridiculous, peculiar to him alone. From the time when a delighted people waited in rapturous impatience for the forthcoming number of *Pickwick*, to the publication of the unfinished *Edwin Drood* (1870), nineteenth-century England laid aside her weariness and her problems to join in Dickens' overflowing, infectious laughter. Since then the world has laughed but little; it smiles, or occasionally catches its breath in astonishment, but there is no more shaking of sides. Outside the field of pure humor, Dickens won a notable success in his *Tale of Two Cities* (1859), in which he departed from his usual manner. Many scenes throughout his other books, as the famous description of the storm in *David Copperfield*, are triumphs of tragic power.

## WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

(1811-1863)

Our habit of grouping the names of Dickens and Thackeray has somewhat obscured the fact that there are great differences in the work of the two men. Not only is Thackeray interested above all in the upper classes of society, while Dickens portrays the lower; but in the methods of his art, Thackeray shows an



ability which makes him in several respects the superior of Dickens. Indeed, Thackeray's skill as a narrator, his virility, his masterly knowledge of character, distinguish him as the supreme novelist of the Victorian era. Other men have perhaps had a broader or more subtle and poetic vision; but no one has combined to such an extent the qualities of realism, ease, and humor, with a knowledge of life as it is; no one has offered us such riches of comedy and tragedy, or tempered such keen satire with so ready and so abundant a charity.

Thackeray was born in Calcutta in 1811, of a family which for two generations had been engaged in the civil service in India. -Losing his father when he was but six years old, the boy was early sent to England for his education. From his eleventh to his seventeenth year he attended the Charterhouse School in London, there becoming famous for his humorous verses and his clever pen-and-ink sketches. In 1829 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge; but he left the university within a year, with the purpose of studying art on the Continent. He went to Weimar, where he met the famous German poet and novelist, Goethe; and afterwards he lived in Paris. But Thackeray lacked the patience to perfect himself in art, and his sheer cleverness as a draughtsman was not such as to win great or lasting success. He returned to England, and, losing in newspaper ventures the money he had inherited, an amount sufficient to have made him independent, he was forced to seek a new activity and to apply himself with greater concentration. In 1837 he began writing for periodicals. For ten years (from 1843) he contributed to *Punch*, writing among other papers the famous *Book of Snobs*; and in 1847-1848 he won his first notable success with the

publication of *Vanity Fair*. From then until 1859 his other great novels appeared at intervals of from two to four years: *Pendennis* (1850); *Henry Esmond* (1852); *The Newcomes* (1854); *The Virginians* (1859). Thackeray continued to write for the magazines, — essays, sketches, and burlesques; and at the time of his death in 1863 left an unfinished novel, *Denis Duval*.

**His Work.** — Thackeray is preëminently the novelist of the gay, dashing world of wealth and fashion. He knows to the heart the life of the club, the drawing-room, and the barracks; and he is fond of painting his heroes as young men of the world, high-spirited and clever, possessed of several amiable but by no means damaging weaknesses, and having no very great virtues beyond that of being honorable gentlemen. Thackeray's world is the world of gentility, a world less shabby than Dickens'; and his chief interest is in portraying that world as it is, in its strength as well as in its weakness, by contrasting sham gentility with real gentility. In *The Book of Snobs* and in *Vanity Fair*, the first works by which Thackeray became widely known, he shows the pretense, the shallowness, and snobbery of much of the society life of his time. With vigorous satire and some scorn, he ridicules those who fawn before riches, who live lavishly on nothing a year; and he laughs at mammas who scheme to get their daughters married. From his soul Thackeray abhorred humbug. Like Carlyle, he fought to destroy all shams and insincerities; but while Carlyle denounced these things, Thackeray laughed at them. "Such people there are," Thackeray writes, stepping "down from the platform," like his master, Fielding, to speak in his own person — "such people there are living and flourishing in the world — Faithless, Hopeless, Charity-

less; let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main. Some there are, and very successful, too, mere quacks and fools; and it was to combat and expose such as these, no doubt, that laughter was made."

But this satire is by no means the only side of Thackeray's genius, nor even the most important. Only the shallow and indiscriminating reader fails to see that Thackeray's charity is deeper and more vital than his cynicism; that though the smile of the man of the world is on his lips, few hearts are more gentle, more compassionate, more tender. Thackeray himself says, "my kind reader will please to remember that this history has 'Vanity Fair' for a title, and that 'Vanity Fair' is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falsenesses and pretensions." Yet in the midst of this world of *Vanity Fair*, with its pettiness, its knavery, and its foolishness, he places the unspoiled Amelia and the honest and faithful Major Dobbin; and in making Amelia his heroine, he shows that for her touching loyalty and devotion he has more genuine admiration than have those critics, frequently, who, while calling her weak and unwomanly, themselves denounce Thackeray as a cynic. If in *Pendennis* we have the world as it looks to the idlers in the Major's club windows, we have also Laura, and "Pen's" confiding mother, Helen Pendennis, apart from it, and unspotted by its taint. But more beautiful than all other creations of Thackeray's reverent and loving nature is the immortal presence of Colonel Newcome, in *The Newcomes*, the man whose memory we hold sacred as that of one we have loved — the strong, humble, simple-minded gentleman, the grizzled soldier with the heart of a child.



**William Makepeace Thackeray**  
**From the portrait by Samuel Laurence**



In all these characters the most wonderful trait is their lifelikeness. They seem to think and talk in their own persons, and are studied from more than one side. With a few deft and rapid strokes, Thackeray will paint with marvelous truth the portrait of a dandy like Joe Sedley or George Osborne in *Vanity Fair*; he has caught exactly the manner of speech, and even the tones of the voice, it seems, — whether it be in the regimental slang of Joe telling his favorite story; in the blandishments of Captain Costigan, in *Pendennis*; or in the hard comment of Madame Bernstein, in *The Virginians*: “Worldly, my dear! So is the world worldly; and we must serve it as it serves us; and give it nothing for nothing.”

In addition to his work as painter of contemporary manners, Thackeray has enriched the literature by two remarkable historical novels, *Henry Esmond* and its sequel *The Virginians*. In the first of these we have the fruits of Thackeray’s careful and loving study of eighteenth-century England, a period with which he was especially identified, and which he had treated critically with extraordinary charm and sympathy in his *Lectures on the English Humourists* (published 1853). *Esmond* is one of the greatest, possibly the greatest, historical novel in English fiction. The story is supposed to be told by Esmond himself, and the book seems less that of a modern writing about the past than the contemporary record of the past itself. Nothing is more wonderful in it than the art with which Thackeray abandons his usual manner to identify himself with the narrator he has created.

Thackeray’s style is exceptionally finished and charming; light, graceful, and incisive, it places him among the greatest prose masters of English fiction.

## GEORGE ELIOT

(1819-1880)

Mary Ann, or Marian, Evans (George Eliot) was born in 1819 at South Farm, Arbury, in Warwickshire. Her father, George Evans, was agent to Sir Roger Newdigate, of Arbury Hall, within the boundaries of whose estate the farm lay. Arbury Hall is in the north-eastern corner of the county, some thirty miles from Stratford. It lies in the same rich and well-watered region that nourished the youth of Shakespeare; a sleepy, abundant land, prosperous, and steeped in drowsy centuries of quiet. In some part of this rich Midland district, at Griff House, near Nuneaton, at school in Coventry, or at Foleshill on its outskirts, the first thirty-two years of George Eliot's life were passed. She was identified with its local interests by birth and by daily contact; her earliest and tenderest recollections clustered round it, and the grace of its liberal beauty, sanctified by memory, remained with her until the end. This English provincial life, thus flowing in the very currents of her blood, became the living material of her art. She was at once of it, and, by the greatness of her genius, apart from it; able both to depict it from within, and to feel it from without. The rural or provincial background which is the setting of so many of her stories is painted from reality, and many of her best-known characters were drawn from, or suggested by, the Warwickshire people she had early known and loved.

At sixteen George Eliot lost her mother and left school to keep house for her father, gaining some experience of farm-life which she afterward used in her

description of the Poyser household in *Adam Bede* (1859). In 1841 she became intimate with a family named Bray, wealthy people who lived in the vicinity of Coventry, and under their influence abandoned forever her faith in Christianity as a divine revelation, seeing in it only a human creation of man's hopes and needs. Her nature, though prone to speculation, was by no means wanting in religious feeling, but,



Birthplace of George Eliot

intellectual as she was, she was easily influenced by others. From the first her tastes had been distinctly studious and scholarly, and in 1846 she began her literary career by translating a German work in harmony with the skeptical ideas she had adopted. Her home was broken up by her father's death in 1849, and two years later, after a short Continental tour, she settled in London as assistant editor of *The Westminster Review*, to which she had already contributed. Her Warwickshire life was over,



and, like Shakespeare when he first turned his face toward London, she stood at the entrance to a new world. *The Westminster Review* numbered Herbert Spencer, the philosopher, and many other distinguished writers among its contributors, and George Eliot's connection with it naturally gave her a place in literary circles.

Among others she met Mr. George Henry Lewes, a discursive, brilliant, but somewhat erratic writer, who combined keen literary sympathies with a distinctly scientific and philosophical bent. A deep attachment grew up between them, but marriage was impossible, as Mr. Lewes' wife, from whom he was separated, was still alive, and through a technicality of the law a divorce could not be obtained. Believing the law unjust, George Eliot took a step which, even in its purely social or legal aspects, must be looked upon as a serious error. She entered upon a lifelong union with Mr. Lewes, which, it must be remembered, was in her eyes a true marriage. It was at the suggestion of Mr. Lewes that George Eliot turned from her distinctly scholarly and critical labors as essayist and translator to begin that work in fiction on which her fame mainly rests. Heretofore her writing had represented chiefly the scholarly side of her mind; it had been the outcome of her studies of books. Now, under Mr. Lewes' encouragement, the other side of her genius declared itself by the publication in *Blackwood's Magazine* of her first story, *Scenes of Clerical Life; The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton* (January, 1857). *Adam Bede*, her first long story, and one of the most wonderful and spontaneous of her books, appeared in 1859, and it was felt "that a new power had arisen in English letters." *Adam Bede* was followed by masterpieces at intervals of one, two, or three

years; thoughtful books of substantial workmanship, not fluently written, with Scott's easy joy in power, but with unspeakable effort, self-discipline, and toil. *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), a dramatic poem, marked a new literary departure, but George Eliot's poetry, though thoughtful and mechanically correct, is distinctly inferior to her prose. Mr. Lewes died in 1878. Barely two years later the world was electrified by the news of George Eliot's marriage to a young London banker, Mr. John Walter Cross. At this time George Eliot was slightly over sixty and Mr. Cross some twenty years her junior. When the intensity of her devotion to Mr. Lewes is taken into account we are inclined to regard this second marriage as a proof that George Eliot's nature was dependent rather than self-reliant. "In her moral development," writes Mr. Cross, "she showed from her earliest years the trait that was most marked in her all through life, namely, the absolute need of some one person who should be all in all to her, and to whom she should be all in all." In the fall of 1880 her health was failing, and in December of that year she died suddenly after a brief illness.

**George Eliot as Novelist.** — George Eliot stands easily in the front rank of English novelists; she must, moreover, be recognized as one of the most influential and distinctly representative writers of the time. Her novels reveal to us a profound and tragically serious student of life. Interested above all in moral problems, she is to be ranked with "the teachers and seekers after light" who were so great a power in the nineteenth century. Yet George Eliot is more than a thinker, precisely as Browning is more than a thinker; both are artists, and give us, not abstract doctrines,

but a philosophy clothed in the language and embodied in the living forms of art. Both feel the burdens and obligations laid upon those who in our modern time think deeply or feel acutely, and both, in harmony with its analytic and questioning spirit, are constrained not only to depict but to moralize, to search into the



George Eliot

motives and the consequences of conduct, to analyze the subtle constitution of the soul. George Eliot was a scholar, but she was still more emphatically a student of life. It is life itself as she has seen it and known it, in the farmhouse or the field, life in the formative experiences of her own soul, which affords her the material for her thought. "I have always thought,"

she writes, "that the most fortunate Britons are those whose experience has given them a practical share in many aspects of the national lot; who have lived among the mixed commonalty, roughing it with them under difficulties, knowing how their food tastes to them, and getting acquainted with their notions and motives, not by inference, from traditional types in literature, or from philosophic theories, but from daily fellowship and observation." George Eliot herself was such a "fortunate Briton," and her work, like that of Shakespeare, of Burns, of Carlyle, and of Dickens, rests securely on her sympathetic understanding of the daily life of man. The truth of her insight into the most ordinary and, as we might consider them, commonplace lives, her tenderness for them, her perception of the pathos and the wonder of their narrow world, is one of the finest traits in her character and her art. In her earliest story, after telling us that the Rev. Amos Barton, whose fortunes she is describing, was "palpably and unmistakably commonplace," she goes on to speak of commonplace people in words which may be taken as a text of all her work. The large majority of our fellow-creatures, she declares, are "simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people — many of them — bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps gone out toward their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance — in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share?"

Here is that democratic spirit of human brotherhood of which we have so often spoken, uttering itself again through literature. Reflecting on these words, we measure again the distance that the England of Victoria has traveled from the England of Pope. It is not enough for us to appreciate that George Eliot shows us ordinary people under ordinary conditions; others have done this. Her distinction is that she feels and makes us feel a something in ordinary lives which before was not apparent. Perhaps when he looks into his own soul no man truly deems himself commonplace. George Eliot gives us such a glimpse into the souls of others. Hence her characters are substantial, living people, filling us with an intense sense of reality. Looking into our own lives we know that their secret vicissitudes are true.

The center of greatest interest in each of these novels is the soul's struggle between right and wrong. By the subtlest touch the author draws aside the veil that hides our inmost selves — sometimes even from our own knowledge — and, with an insight that is frequently startling, shows us how temptation, at first repelled, gradually and insidiously disintegrates our moral being. Her novels show the process whereby the little hole in the dykes of conscience slowly and imperceptibly widens until at last it lets in the overwhelming flood of disaster and retribution. For human weakness in the presence of temptation, this student of conscience has abundant compassion, but she insists upon the stern obligation to sacrifice our pleasure to the common good. Yet this sacrifice is insisted on by George Eliot, not because of an earthly peace or a future reward; right-doing is often a hard thing; wrong-doing is often a pleasant and an easy thing;

but "because right is right," we are to follow it "in scorn of consequence."

Such a moral tone is both lofty and in the highest degree austere and uncompromising. Not only are the inexorable claims of duty constantly forced home to us, but in the performance of duty George Eliot recognized no divine helper; she is strengthened by no hope of a reward hereafter. The individual loses that the race may gain. Such doctrines place her with the great moral teachers of her century, but render her books preëminently exacting and almost somber. "My books," she writes, "are deeply serious things to me, and come out of all the painful discipline, all the most hardly learned lessons of my past life." From the literary aspect, perhaps *Silas Marner* is her most artistically perfect story, and *Middlemarch* her greatest work. Quite aside from their teaching, it is the art of these great books — their poetic beauty of style, their subtle understanding of the lives of men and women — that places them with the great imaginative productions of the literature.

**Other Novelists.** — Among the women novelists of the Victorian period, those of greatest distinction after George Eliot are the three sisters, CHARLOTTE, EMILY, and ANNE BRONTË, the daughters of the parish clergyman of the little Yorkshire village of Haworth. Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855) published *Jane Eyre* in 1847. In the same year Emily Brontë (1818–1848) published *Wuthering Heights*, a story which in its descriptions of Nature, its somber unreality, and its wild and stirring power, seems, in some respects, the most perfect incarnation of the Brontë genius.

At the farthest remove from the passionate intensity of these works is the placid and soothing tone of *The*

*Warden* (1855) by ANTHONY TROLLOPE (1815–1882). In this book Trollope began his restful and marvelously truthful studies of life in an English cathedral town, which he made famous under the name of “Barchester.” WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS (1824–1889) showed a fertility of invention and great ingenuity in the conception and elaboration of his plots. *The Woman in White* (1860) and *Armada* (1866) must be placed with the most skilfully written and fascinating novels of plot and incident. A little later, J. H. SHORTHOUSE (1834–1903), a scholarly Birmingham manufacturer, won the praise of the cultivated and discerning by the spiritual elevation, subtle thought, and delicate beauty of his *John Inglesant* (1881), a philosophical romance of the time of Charles I. CHARLES READE (1814–1884) wrote several novels with the express purpose of exposing and correcting contemporary social abuses. In *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1856) he attacked the English prison system; and in *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870) criticized the trade-unions. His one romance, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), a wonderfully careful and minute study of life in Europe in the fifteenth century, has been placed by Swinburne “among the very greatest masterpieces of narration.” But the historical romance received greater attention at the hands of CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819–1875). In *Hypatia* (1853), he found a subject for romance in the Alexandria of the fifth century; in *Westward Ho!* (1855), he pictured the life of Elizabethan seamen on the Devon coast and the Spanish main; and in *Hereward the Wake* (1866), he told of the last struggle of the English against their Norman conquerors.

**Robert Louis Stevenson** (1850–1894). — But while Kingsley’s tales of adventure possess a certain charm,

it was left for a far different man, of the next generation, to distil the very essence of romance, and to give us the real tang of the sea. Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850, that "romantic town" which, as the home of his youth, became in later years the Mecca of his imagination and memory. With Stevenson the love of romance was an inborn passion. The love of the sea, its dangers, its wild islands and rocky coasts, ran in the blood. His father and grandfather had been lighthouse builders, — romantic figures, whose joy in their career was as "strong as the love of woman." Stevenson himself said that he loved a ship "as a man loves Burgundy or daybreak." But he who, beyond all, craved a career of action, and who set life above literature, was destined to express himself not through deeds but through letters, and to try the temper of his spirit in a lifelong battle with disease.

A sickly boyhood made a regular education impossible, but what Stevenson missed in schooling he more than made up by his own ingenuity, and by travel with his parents. Even thus early, in playing at pirate and in planning and writing stories, he showed that love of literature and adventure which remained with him through life. In 1867 Stevenson entered the University of Edinburgh, but there, too, his education was fragmentary. He attended lectures irregularly, merely dropping in when he happened that way in the course of more profitable pursuits. Much of his time he spent rambling about the country, "scraping romantic acquaintance," as he would say, with beggars, innkeepers, and other characters of the road. But at the same time he was doing much reading; he was noting his impressions, and training himself in the art of writ-



ing. His first published article was a familiar essay *On Roads* (1873). From 1874 to the end of his life Stevenson spent most of his time beyond the British Isles, in search of health. He lived in France, Switzerland, America, and among the islands of the South Seas. In 1891 he settled in Samoa, where, in the silence of his forest home above the sea, he died in 1894.

In Stevenson's works we find that high spirit of enthusiasm, that fine ardor of boyhood, that sense of the romance of the present, which, with the deeper seriousness born of his long struggle with death, was his richest gift to his time. In 1883 Stevenson published *Treasure Island*, his first long story of adventure. *Treasure Island* is a boy's book — with a difference. We recognize the familiar materials of the sensational story-teller, for there are pirates, a lonely and mysterious island, a search for hidden treasure, much bad language, and a prodigious expenditure of blood. But these rather shabby stage properties have become a new thing under Stevenson's hand. He has lifted his theme into a higher region by his own genuinely romantic enjoyment of the story, and his gift of a literary style.

We cannot follow Stevenson's development here through his later romances up to his unfinished book *Weir of Hermiston*, but one characteristic of his work cannot be entirely passed over — its pictorial power. His stories abound in scenes which are indelibly stamped on the imagination. In the *Master of Ballantrae*, perhaps his most perfect book, we see the duel between the two brothers, in the cold of that "windless" night when the sky was a black roof overhead and the candles burned steady. Apparently

it was often the scene, the appropriate setting for a story, that set his imagination to work. In *A Gossip on Romance*, Stevenson says: "Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck."

But a youthful joy in romance, and an æsthetic devotion to the refinements of style, were far from satisfying Stevenson's whole nature. He had a tougher fiber in him; he had the force to think and the strength to endure; and he consistently used literature in the service of life. His philosophy is contained in his own words: "There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make their neighbours good. One person I have to make good: myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy — if I may."

**George Meredith** (1828–1909). — Of a very different type was the work of George Meredith, one of the earliest and one of the latest of the Victorians. His interest centered not so much in action as in thought and passion, and his novels are notable for their play of wit and their nervous energy rather than for any clear or interesting narrative.

Born in 1828, and producing his first novel of importance, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, in 1859, Meredith belongs in point of time to the generation of Thackeray and George Eliot; but because of the cast of his mind and his tardy recognition by the public, he is placed with the later Victorians. Meredith came of Welsh and Irish parentage. His early education was obtained in Germany. After returning to England and attempting the study of the law, he entered upon the career of letters. Beside writing poems, he became

correspondent for the *Morning Post*, reader and critic for one of the leading publishing houses, and, for a brief period, editor of the *Fortnightly Review*. With the appearance of his novels, the reputation which he had gained among a coterie of the first literary men of London gradually increased, until, though never popular, his books came to be regarded as classics by the connoisseurs of literature in general.

Meredith is one of the most difficult of novelists to read. As with Browning, with whom he is often compared, the intricacies of his style and the rush of his thought exact from the reader patient and exhausting study. The reason for this is that Meredith is interested primarily in what men think, and only secondarily in what they do. He is professedly the philosopher, who has chosen to communicate the results of his study of human life through the form of fiction. But in the midst of much philosophy there are also certain memorable characters and scenes. The love-scene between Richard and Lucy in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is justly famous. But Meredith's world is the world of exclusive culture and breeding, the aristocracy of blood, intellect, and cleverness. Moreover, the tense, overcharged atmosphere of his books is unrelieved by the quiet of ordinary life, and his characters are usually taken at the height of nervous excitement. They are strung to the high tension of Meredith's own mental life, and seem to think and speak his thoughts rather than their own.

**Thomas Hardy.** — The somber and impressive novels of Thomas Hardy (born 1840) are the work of a man of genius who is a poet at heart. The essentially poetic character of his mind is shown, not in any outward adornment of style, but in the tone and construction

of his greatest books, and in his whole view of human life and nature.

Born in an obscure hamlet, in the heart of a wooded region north of Dorchester, Hardy has passed the greater part of his life among the country scenes and the rustic life he has chosen to describe. He is "a peasant and a woodlander," a student and a thinker. At seventeen he began the study of architecture in Dorsetshire, and at twenty he came up to London to practise his profession. In 1874 he won his first great popular success by *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He gave up the practice of his profession, retired to Dorsetshire, and devoted himself to literary work.

Hardy is one of the most subtle and sympathetic of the modern interpreters of Nature. His descriptions have the minuteness and accuracy born of long knowledge and close observation, and they show, what is even more than this, the power of entering into the mood of a scene, of making us feel the tone, or atmosphere, of a landscape, of identifying himself, as it would seem, with the very life of the natural objects he describes. These moors and farms and sheepfolds of Wessex that he has revealed to us in storm and calm, in daylight, in darkness, or at dawn, he peoples with men and women of a strong, primitive type, the true children of the soil. He has written true pastorals full of humor, and yet touched with an idyllic freshness and beauty; not suppressing homely or vulgar realities, but impressing us with a sense of the pathos and wonder in occupations that are as old, almost, as the life of men. In such books as *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* we are brought near to that immemorial and almost inarticulate peasant class, that lives close to

the dumb creatures, and in the old vital dependence upon the earth.

**His View of Life.**—But Hardy does not merely show us the tragedy and comedy of human life, played by men and women of strong passions, of simple and powerful natures, upon an ancient and majestic scene. He is not an impartial, dispassionate observer, he is an interpreter or critic of life; he shows us the pettiness, the defeats, the cruel misery and tragedy of man's lot, and forces us to ask why these things should be. The transitory and ineffectual life of man is contrasted—as in the poetry of Matthew Arnold—with the permanence and power of the physical universe. But in Hardy's view, Nature is not merely indifferent to man: at times there is something in the constitution of things almost positively malign.

Without inquiring into the correctness of Hardy's views, we may observe that the passionate sincerity of his convictions has seemingly impaired his impartiality as an observer of the facts of life. Especially in some of his later books he resembles a scientist who, in his anxiety to prove a preconceived theory, observes and reports upon only one set of facts, unconsciously slighting or suppressing whatever militates against his conclusions. This inability to weigh all the evidence and to see life fairly in all its aspects is a flaw in Hardy's art. At the same time, his earnestness, his sincerity, his poetic genius, and dramatic power entitle him to a high place among the masters of English fiction.

**Rudyard Kipling** (born 1864).—Far removed from the quiet, poetic world of Thomas Hardy, with its twilight of pessimism, is the practical, active, and oftentimes rough, life in camps and cities portrayed by Rudyard Kipling. While Hardy dwells upon those

memorials of England's past which are preserved in the quiet valleys of Wessex, Kipling takes us to the frontiers of the British Empire, and looks upon England's present greatness and prosperity and her promise in the future with true British satisfaction. More truly than any one else, Kipling is the representative author of English colonial life. He has traveled in India, Africa, Australia, and America, and he has portrayed especially the life of the military and governing classes of India with a rough vigor and fidelity. His work is noted for its splendid energy, and for its wholesome delight in the more primitive passions of men of action and of war. *Kim*, one of his few novels, is a brilliant and effective study of Anglo-Indian life, but in such collections of short stories as *Soldiers Three* (1888), *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1890), and *The Day's Work* (1894), Kipling is at his best in the realm of fiction. In describing the life of the British soldier and sailor, he shows the journalist's power of grasping the essential facts of his subject and of shaping them into a picturesque and vivid narrative. The same rough, masculine vigor, the same indifference to conventional standards, are seen in his verse. He is the poet of the life of action, the poet of Imperial England, and in the march of his resounding lines we find again the vigor, the hopefulness, the unquestioning courage of youth.

## VICTORIAN POETRY

While the fullest and most spirited pictures of the daily life and interests of the Victorian period are found in the novel, the poets have given artistic expression to the spiritual unrest, and the higher needs and aspira-

tions of the time. Victorian poets, like those of the age of Queen Anne, have usually aimed at correctness and beauty of form, and even in the lesser Victorians, while the thought may be familiar and the inspiration weak, we generally find the verse smooth and the style carefully finished. Tennyson is the representative poet of the period; and while his manner is very different, Tennyson is in his own way as correct and as careful an artist as Pope. But Victorian poetry has a broader range, as well as a deeper passion, than that of the Augustan age. Pope and his contemporaries excelled in one kind of verse, the heroic couplet; Tennyson and the other poets of the Victorian era are remarkable for their mastery of many meters, and their successes in different and often novel poetic forms. Victorian poetry treats of a wide variety of subjects, classical, medieval, oriental, and modern, but it is above all else personal, a revelation of the inmost thoughts and feelings of the poet himself. It has produced *In Memoriam*, a poem in which the poet tells us of his sorrows, doubts, and hopes, but it has not excelled in the drama, for there the author must forget himself and reveal the life and character of others.

Science and democracy, the two dominant motive forces of the era, affected the Victorian poets in different ways. Some, repelled and disgusted by much that seemed to them ugly and commonplace in the everyday life about them, sought to escape through poetry into an ideal world, less vulgar and more to their mind. Unlike Wordsworth, these poets saw nothing wonderful or beautiful in the lives of the men and women about them. Like Keats, they ignored the hopes and perplexities of their own age, and finding no beauty in modern life sought for it in the past. They took

refuge from the prosaic and the commonplace in the romance of the Middle Ages, or they tried to escape the unrest and struggle of the century by going back in imagination to the calm beauty of the world of the old Greeks.

**The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.**—This impulse to get away from the prosaic features of modern life through art manifested itself in painting as well as in poetry; and it is closely connected with the rise of a new school of painters known as the *Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*. This school was founded about 1848 by three young painters, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John Everett Millais. The members of this school were called *Pre-Raphaelites* because, while it was usual for art students to copy Raphael, the Brotherhood studied and followed certain Italian painters before Raphael's time. The Pre-Raphaelite movement was but another manifestation of that impulse to get back into the medieval world which had already shown itself in poetry, in the novel, and in other forms. The ideas of the Pre-Raphaelites found literary expression in a magazine called *The Germ* (1850). Rossetti, a leading spirit in the Pre-Raphaelite movement, was a poet as well as a painter, and he often embodied the same or similar conceptions in his poems and in his pictures. Rossetti was not only a man of genius, there was something about his singular personality which won him enthusiastic and devoted followers; and being master of two arts, he exercised a strong influence on poets as well as painters.

**Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (1828–1882) was the son of an Italian patriot who had been exiled for political reasons and had taken refuge in England. Rossetti's father was a remarkable man of highly artistic nature, a poet, a



musician, an artist, and a student and critic of Dante. Rossetti, though born and brought up in London, was thus surrounded in his childhood by Italian art and culture, and, besides this, was three-fourths Italian by descent. The boy's love of art showed itself very early. From his childhood he was both a writer and a maker of verse, and at fourteen he left school and began to study to be an artist. It was while he was an art student at the Royal Academy that he met Millais, Hunt, and a sculptor named Thomas Woolman, who were soon to be associated with him in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He did not, however, give up poetry for painting, as the *Blessed Damozel*, one of the best known and most characteristic of his poems, was composed in his nineteenth year. In 1871 he published some masterly translations of early Italian poetry, but his public recognition as a poet dates from the appearance of a collection of his poems in 1870. This volume created a sensation in the literary world.

**Rossetti's Poetry.** — Rossetti, one of his followers declared, had "ever something about him of mystic isolation," and one of the most obvious characteristics of his poetry is its remoteness from actual life. Rossetti and his associates separated themselves from the ordinary interests, occupations, and desires of the men around them, and found a delight and a place of refuge in a world of emotion and of art. Such an unnatural separation is almost certain to injure the man and the quality of his work. The poet, loving Beauty only, and absorbed in a lifelong luxury of emotion, loses his manliness and balance of nature, cut off from wholesome, human contact with the real world.

Arnold was called "the Apostle of Culture," Rossetti may be called "the Apostle of Beauty." He had great

artistic gifts; his poetry is richly colored, his verse is curiously and skilfully wrought, but his work is not entirely wholesome, manly, or sincere. His poetic world lies beyond the limits of our ordinary experience, — a shadowy world, ruled by mystery, wonder, beauty, and love, and lit by another light than that of common day. He represents a late stage of that romantic movement, that sense of the mysterious and the supernatural that we find in Coleridge, that worship of beauty which we find in Keats. Some of Rossetti's sonnets are among the best in the language. He was also fond of the ballad form, and many of his best known poems, such as *The King's Tragedy* and *The White Ship*, belong to this class.

Rossetti's was a strange, wayward genius, and in his contradictory nature strength and weakness were curiously mingled. At first he was full of youthful hope and energy, and as we think of him in his last years, shut in his London library with his dreams of beauty and his drugs, we feel that something was wrong with his life, and something lacking in his work. Yet, whatever we may miss in Rossetti's poetry, he holds a high, although not the highest, place among the leading poets of the Victorian age.

**William Morris.** — Among the band of devoted followers that Rossetti gathered around him in the earlier part of his career was WILLIAM MORRIS (1834–1896), a man of varied talent and restless energy. Morris tried his hand at painting, architecture, and poetry. In 1863, with Rossetti and several others, he founded an establishment for household decoration. Morris was the leading spirit, although by no means the greatest artist, in this enterprise, which was deservedly successful. But while Morris's energy expended itself

in many directions — while he made household furniture, stained-glass windows, curtains, rugs or tapestry, or sought to improve the art of printing or book-making, — one controlling motive gave unity to his work. A true lover of beauty himself, he tried in innumerable ways to stimulate a national love of the beautiful, to refine the popular taste, and to mitigate the ugliness or commercialism of modern life.

In early manhood Morris met Rossetti and was strongly influenced by his magnetic and dominant personality. Like the other members of the little group, Morris was strongly attracted to the Middle Ages, and his first book, *The Defense of Guinevere and other Poems* (1858) consists of a series of remarkable medieval studies. In many of these poems everything is studiously unreal; the knights, the maidens with large eyes, yellow hair, and decorative figures, — all those objects and images which were the “theatrical properties” of the Pre-Raphaelites — are freely introduced. Morris showed the same avoidance of the problems and vexations of modern life in *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–1870), containing the most popular and possibly the best of his poems. *The Earthly Paradise*, it has been said, “is fit reading for sleepy summer afternoons.” We are transported to an enchanted region, a world of beautiful illusions, where everything seems shadowy and remote. Our dreamy contentment is disturbed by no cry of human passion; it is interrupted by no real earnestness of mood, by no memorable thought; we are permitted to glide along on the smooth current of the even, melodious, and (it must be confessed) somewhat monotonous verse. Morris did not attempt to do more in *The Earthly Paradise* than bring a temporary repose and forgetfulness through art.

“Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,  
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?”

But Morris was no mere dreamer, he was a burly, robust man, full of vitality, a fighter and a reformer. In his later years, he faced, as Ruskin did, the pressing social questions of his time, and strove manfully to set the crooked straight. He became a socialist, and his belief in the possibility of social reform gave a new hopefulness and vigor to his work; he was a prolific writer both in poetry and in prose; he had unquestionably a strong influence upon the social, artistic, and literary life of his time, but there is a diffuseness in his poetry which is likely to tell against its permanence.

**Swinburne.** — Another poet associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE (1837–1909), the eldest son of Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, who came of an old and honorable Northumbrian family. He was educated at Eton and at Oxford. He early began a long friendship with William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Rossetti, who was nine years his senior. But while Swinburne, like Morris and Rossetti, lived in an ideal world of art and beauty; while, like his brother poets, he often chose to write on classic or medieval themes, his temper, unlike theirs, was not gentle and dreamy, but stirring, rebellious, and defiant. The first book of Swinburne's which made a decided impression was his noble drama, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), which is among the greatest reproductions of classical tragedy in English literature. Its pathos is true and restrained; and in its choruses, with their superb union of force and grace, with the exultant and impetuous lightness of their lyrical flight, the world heard for the first time the marvelous music

of the great modern master of English verse. In 1866 the publication of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* awoke a tempest of mingled praise and condemnation. After this time Swinburne wrote steadily and produced a number of historical dramas and other poems.

Swinburne's ultimate place among English poets is still uncertain. Every one admits his gifts of expression; but many feel that he is not merely fluent, but too often unrestrained and diffuse. Swinburne, in fact, was an artist, not a philosopher. He was guided by impulse, by feeling, not by careful thought or a well-balanced judgment; and, when he assayed to think, his highly emotional nature, combined as it was with an extraordinary volubility, led him into extremes. In spirit Byron and Swinburne, while separated by obvious differences in form, have much in common. Both men show the same genuine, but shallow, ardor for liberty; the same impatience of restraint; the same passionate rebellion against the order of things. To Swinburne, life was bitterness; love a consuming passion, an added misery; death a welcome oblivion which shall cure all and end all. Man, indeed, is the one being in Creation worthy of reverence, "the master of things," and in the progress of man towards some undefined goal, Swinburne found, or attempted to find, a ground of consolation and of hope. In such ideas there is nothing either original or profound. Swinburne's lack of philosophic insight should not blind us to the splendor of his poetic achievement, nor should the glorious melody, the profuse beauty of his verse, lead us to attribute to his poetry virtues which it cannot be said to possess.

## ROBERT BROWNING

(1812-1889)

Robert Browning, the most stimulating and original poet of his time, was born in Camberwell, a London suburb, in 1812. His father, a clerk in the Bank of England, was a cultivated man, an omnivorous reader, a student of the classics, and an art critic of no mean ability. He early taught his son Robert to read Greek and Latin, making his declensions amusing to him by setting them in rhymes. At eight years of age the boy began to translate the *Odes* of Horace. His mother was a gentle, sensitive woman, whom he dearly loved, and whose music early entered into his soul. Camberwell, which was at that time almost like the country, is on the south side of the Thames, not far from Herne Hill, where Ruskin lived. The boy could ramble about under the trees, and hear the nightingales sing. He loved to go to a quiet spot near three big elm trees, and gaze at London. He could see the great towers of Westminster Abbey rising above the roofs as out of a great plain, and the gold cross on the dome of St. Paul's gleam in the sunshine. The mystery of the great city with its countless throngs of people appealed strongly to his imagination. He was largely taught at home, although he went for a time to school at Peckham, which was near Camberwell. His father preferred giving his son a private tutor and lessons in music at home, to sending him to a public school and the university, which was the more regular training for an English boy. Browning heard a few lectures at the University of London, and then he went abroad as to a larger university, first to Russia, and then to Italy,

which became the land of his adoption. He loved Italy devotedly all his life; his own words were,

"Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'"

Thus while he had not such a thorough and regular



Robert Browning

education as Matthew Arnold enjoyed, he had a broad and deep cultivation, he loved art in its various forms, music and painting as well as poetry. He came under the spell of Byron, and a little later was fascinated by Shelley.

Browning's literary career, which extended over a period of fifty years, began in 1833 with the publication

of his first long poem, *Pauline*, which was followed by *Paracelsus*. Shortly after the publication of *Paracelsus*, a well-known actor, Macready, met Browning and asked him to write a play. Browning wrote *Strafford*, and it was successfully produced at the Covent Garden Theatre. In 1841 Browning consented to publish a number of his plays and poems in a series of cheap pamphlets, the series to be called *Bells and Pomegranates*. The first number contained *Pippa Passes* and was sold for sixpence. At first people were slow to recognize as a genius this new, strong, earnest poet, who wrote so buoyantly and hopefully of life and death. He made many friends, however, for his winning personality drew to him all sorts and conditions of men, among them Wordsworth and Tennyson.

In 1845 the romance of Browning's life began in his introduction to Elizabeth Barrett, whose poems he had long admired. She was an invalid, seldom leaving her couch, a delicate, spiritual woman, who had early imbibed a love of Greek literature, as Browning himself had. Browning loved her at first sight and made her his wife in 1846, ignoring the despotic opposition of her father. It was a most happy marriage, in spite of Wordsworth's wondering remark when he heard of it: "So, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett have gone off together! Well, I hope they may understand each other — nobody else could!" They did understand each other most perfectly, for each spoke the language of spirit and truth, and their life together was an exquisite living love-poem. They settled in Florence, in an old palace called Casa Guidi, and here they loved and lived and wrote. In 1855 *Men and Women* was published, containing fifty of Browning's best known and some of his noblest poems.



Mrs. Browning's frail life began to fade, although she was surrounded by all that love could devise for her, and she died in 1861. Browning returned to England, where he did not shut himself up in morbid sorrow, but lived a sane, wholesome life, going out a great deal, hearing the best music, going to the art exhibitions, and strengthening all with whom he came in contact by his noble personality. In 1868 Browning's greatest work, *The Ring and the Book*, was published. It is a huge psychological epic of more than twenty-one thousand lines, one of the most considerable poetic achievements of the century. He returned to Italy, and was living in Venice, when, taking cold, bronchitis set in, and he died after a short illness, on December 12, 1889.

Browning had the scholar's love of curious learning, the artist's delight in beauty. He loved books and poetry, paintings, sculpture, and music, but he felt that even art and knowledge were narrower and less wonderful than life. He did not shut himself away in a library or a studio; he entered into the wholesome joys of man's life, of "the mere living," and declared—

"Indeed to know is something,  
But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too."

While a great deal that he wrote is hard to understand, and deals with profound subjects, Browning could, when he chose, write simple and spirited narrative poems, such as *Hervé Riel*, the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, or *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. It is doubtful whether in any one of his dramas he really meets the needs of the stage, yet, while he is not a dramatist, a large proportion of his poems, monologues, idyls, or lyrics, are distinctly dramatic in spirit. The dramatic monologue is a poetic form in which, while there is only one

speaker, he is not speaking to himself, as in a soliloquy, but to some one else, whose presence is constantly suggested or implied. Browning probably excels all other poets in his mastery of this form. In *My Last Duchess* we can fairly watch the merry light fade from the Duchess' face, before the withering blight of the Duke's chill presence. Browning believes that if we are to understand the meaning and purpose of our life here, we must think of it as merely a prelude and a preparation for a life hereafter. This world is a great training-school, a place where souls are developed and disciplined by pain and by pleasure,—where they are given a chance to grow. While this earthly life will end, its effect upon the soul will remain:

“Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.”

The most important thing in life, therefore, is neither art nor knowledge, neither pain nor pleasure: it is the soul, and the use it makes of its earthly experience. With the Pre-Raphaelites art is an end in itself; with Browning it is only a means for the soul's development. In such a poem as *Abt Vogler*, Browning shows us how music can lift us out of ourselves:

“The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;”

In *Andrea del Sarto* we are taught to perceive that the aspiration in a picture is worth more than mere technical skill. As Andrea looks at Raphael's work he is in despair, for, although he feels that he could improve the drawing, he says,

“its soul is right,  
He means right—that a child may understand” —

and Andrea knew that with all his skill he could not paint the soul in the picture, for he had not kept his own soul free from guilt. Browning saw the art for art's sake when he wrote *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church*, for there the art was made simply an accessory to the Bishop's pride, and became "Vanity."

With Browning, life must be lived to the full, and love enters, and is used also as a means of attaining the highest. In *Youth and Art*, Browning shows us how small all earthly gain is, if we barter love for riches. The young students in the poem might have found bliss, but they chose wealth, and the youth sums it up,

"This could have happened once,  
And we missed it, lost it forever."

So art, and love, and all of life go to the development of the soul. The soul in its relation to the unseen is the chief subject of Browning's work, as — in his judgment — it is the supreme interest in life. Familiar as this may seem to us, Browning had virtually created poetry of a wholly new order. As life here is to be looked at as a preparation for life hereafter, we are to welcome all experiences, and they are important chiefly as they forward, or retard, the growth of the soul. So Browning teaches us to prize all experiences, — joy, sorrow, aspiration, and moments of intense feeling, — for in them we too have our Mount of Vision, and our souls learn to breathe a purer air.

**ALFRED TENNYSON**

(1809-1892)

We have left our study of Tennyson to the last, because he represents, more fully and faithfully than any other writer, the changing life and thought of the Victorian era from first to last. Rossetti represents an art movement, which does not become important until the Victorian era is well advanced; Arnold represents a particular phase of thought, characteristic, as we have seen, of the middle and later years of the century. But, apart from other reasons, Tennyson holds a very different position from such writers as Rossetti and Arnold, because he lived and worked longer than any other English poet of the time. He was born in the early years of the nineteenth century, before the *Waverley* novels were written, when George III was on the throne, and Napoleon was the terror of Europe; he died when the century was nearing its end. He began his work as a poet before Victoria came to the throne; he continued to write until her long reign was almost over. He lived to be eighty-three years old, and sixty-five busy years lie between the appearance of his first work and the publication of his last. For half a century he was generally looked up to, both in England and America, as the greatest living poet of the English race. So we cannot definitely associate him, as we can Rossetti, with any one group of poets; we cannot say that he belongs wholly, or even chiefly, either to the earlier or the later part of the era. He belongs to it all. The greater part of those changes in life and thought which have already been described took place during his lifetime. He saw the old order yielding place to the

new; he felt the fierce struggle of his time, and fought out the long battle of his generation from first to last. So, if we study Tennyson carefully, and read his poems in the order in which they were written, we shall find that they help us to follow the inner life of Victorian England from the beginning almost to the end.

Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809, at Somersby, a tiny village in the East Midland region of Lincolnshire, where his father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, was rector. The country immediately about Somersby has a richness and beauty wanting in many other parts of the county. It is "A land of quiet villages, large fields, grey hillsides, and noble tall-towered churches." From the first, Tennyson was an observant and a true lover of nature, and these quiet country scenes entered deeply into his life.

After some training at home, and in the grammar school at Louth, a town some twenty miles away, Tennyson entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1828. Here, shy as he was, he showed that he had a great power of making friends. He joined a debating society, which included among its members several of the ablest young men in the University. Among this little group of bright and congenial spirits was Arthur Henry Hallam, a young man of rare promise and singularly sweet and lovable nature, whose short life is indissolubly linked with the career of Tennyson. Long before he entered college, Tennyson had written verses; he had even printed a volume in conjunction with his brother Charles, in 1827; but at Cambridge he first made a decided impression by his prize poem, *Timbuctoo*. In 1830 Tennyson made his real entrance into the world of English letters by the publication of a slim volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*. It is largely



**Alfred Tennyson**  
**From the portrait by G. F. Watts, R. A.**



the work of an experimentalist in meter and melody; like the preliminary studies of an artist who is bent upon mastering the technique of his art. He had something of Keats' delight in color and melody; yet even in this early effort we detect a note of divergence from those poets who, like Keats, loved "beauty only." He shows us his ideal poet "dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love," whose melodies fling abroad the winged shafts not of beauty but of "truth." In a remarkable poem, *The Palace of Art*, which appeared in a volume published in 1832, Tennyson defined clearly his position on this point, as against Keats' oft-repeated principle that

"Beauty is truth; truth beauty."

Tennyson lost his father in 1830, and in that year left Cambridge without taking a degree. In 1833 came the shock of a profounder sorrow in the loss of his more than brother, Arthur Hallam, who died suddenly in Vienna. *In Memoriam*, that incomparable poem in which Tennyson, seventeen years later, gave to the world the record of this story of friendship and loss, admits us into the sacred places of this great grief.

After Hallam's death Tennyson lived chiefly in London, writing constantly, but publishing almost nothing. He belonged to a select coterie, the "Sterling Club," where he met Carlyle, Thackeray, and many other famous men. Nearly ten years' silence was broken at last in 1842 by two volumes of poems, including many of his earlier poems revised, and about as much new matter. The new poems included the *Morte d'Arthur*, *Ulysses*, *The Two Voices*, and *Locksley Hall*, and won for Tennyson most enthusiastic recognition



from both readers and critics. From this time Tennyson took a leading place in the literature of his day. From 1842, until the time of his death, he lived a life of seclusion and of steady industry: a life marked by few striking outward happenings, and chiefly remarkable for that progress of the soul, of which the succession of his books is a lasting memorial. Carlyle has given us a description of Tennyson at this time which serves to bring him vividly before us. "One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusky dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy, smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical, metallic, fit for loud laughter and piercing wail. I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe." In another place Carlyle speaks of him as a "lifeguardsman spoilt by making poetry," for Tennyson was tall and soldierly, with a free and swinging gait. We can easily picture him wrapped in his cloak, with a broad-brimmed soft hat pulled over his brow, as he strode over the downs, or climbed the sea cliffs which he loved so much.

The year 1850 stands out from all other years of Tennyson's life, for in it he was married to Miss Emily Sellwood, he published *In Memoriam*, and he was appointed to the Laureateship of England. Three years later he settled at Farringford, in the Isle of Wight. With Farringford, and with a place at Blackdown in Sussex, which he bought in 1867, his later life is chiefly associated. When he wrote *Demeter*, Tennyson had passed the allotted threescore years and ten. He was awaiting with a beautiful tranquillity and confidence the time when this "goodly prison" should be opened.

Death came to him gently, as the gracious and fitting close to a lofty life. The white mist hung low over the earth, but the room in which the poet lay was glorious in moonlight. Illuminated in its white radiance, with a volume of Shakespeare in his hand, his finger still marking the dirge in *Cymbeline*, which he had lately read, the



Farringford

Laureate passed peacefully out of this "bourne of time and space" as one prepared to depart.

**Tennyson as a Poetic Artist.** — Tennyson is pre-eminent in his mastery of the poetic form, in his technical skill as an artist in words. In many of his poems he deals with very abstruse and difficult themes, but, unlike Browning and Swinburne, he is almost always clear. Indeed, Tennyson has such a wonderful power of making himself understood,

that careless readers often fail to appreciate the depth of his thought. Tennyson is not only remarkable for clearness and conciseness of expression, he is chiefly remarkable for the *range and variety of his work*. His work covers almost the entire field of the poet's art. He is a lyric poet, an epic poet, a dramatist; he writes ballads, dialect poems, sonnets, and elegies. He is a consummate artist, as varied in subject as in manner. In *Ulysses*, *The Lotus Eaters*, and many other poems, he treats of classic themes; in *St. Simon Stylites*, *Galahad*, and others, he goes to the Middle Ages for his subjects; while in such poems as *Maud*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, or *Aylmer's Field*, he gives us finished studies of the life of modern England. In *Dora*, he told a story of quiet country life as simply as Wordsworth might have done; in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, he was the patriot poet, stirring the heart of England, very much as Kipling stirred it at a later time. You have only to compare the rough vigor and humor of the *Northern Farmer* with the spiritual exaltation and refined beauty of *In Memoriam* to form some idea of the range and variety of Tennyson's art.

Of course Tennyson was not equally successful in all these widely different fields, yet his skill as an artist seldom fails him, and on the whole the average excellence of his poetry is surprisingly high.

**Theory of Art.** — Tennyson was a true lover of beauty. He is both *musical* and *pictorial*; that is, he had a fine ear for the melody of words, and a quick and true eye for all that is picturesque. But while he loved beauty, and while he had a marvelous power of expressing it, he believed, like Milton and Browning, that beauty is not the only essential of great poetry. To Tennyson the true poet must be something of a prophet; he

must not live for himself only, in selfish enjoyment of culture or emotion, — he must be the helper and teacher of others. Tennyson's convictions on this whole question of the right relation of beauty and culture to life were embodied, as has been already said, in a memorable and beautiful poem, *The Palace of Art*. Not all the refined enjoyments of human life, all knowledge, though we know "the best that has been said and thought in the world," all beauty, not even all religions, — if they are merely studied, but neither practised nor believed, — will save the "sinful soul," if, absorbed in itself, it fails in love to others, for love is the greatest thing in the world.

"And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be  
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie  
Howling in outer darkness."

In her high palace of Art, built far above the reach of common men, the selfish soul learns at last that culture and beauty are not enough for life. In her despair she hears from far off the sound of human footsteps, — the steps of the men and women who toil and suffer in the great plain below. She comes down from her lofty house of pride and selfishness, and seeks for herself a cottage in the valley. The royal palace is left untouched; her mistake has not been in loving beauty and culture, but in loving them only:

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are  
So lightly, beautifully built:  
Perchance I may return with others there  
When I have purged my guilt."

**As a Teacher.** — Tennyson was not content with pointing out the place that beauty and culture should

hold in life; he practised what he taught. He did not shut himself away from his fellow-men in a Palace of Art, he was keenly interested in the scientific thought and social questions of the day, and more fully than any other Victorian poet he felt and interpreted the changing spirit of his time. We cannot do more here than refer to some of the fundamental principles of Tennyson's teaching, and show in a very general way how he spoke for Victorian England as well as for himself.

First of all, Tennyson was distinctly the poet of the new science. In *Locksley Hall*, one of his earlier poems, he put into stirring verse the youthful enthusiasm of those who, as they looked at the wonders which were being done by science, thought that a better day had at last dawned for the race. The hero of the poem has nourished his youthful spirit on "the fairy tales of science." He is unsuccessful in love, and in the bitterness of his disappointment he finds consolation in the future triumphs of science, in the "Vision of the World" that is to be. Written in the early years in an era of change, this poem sounded as a trumpet call to young men of that generation, for its cry is — "Forward!" — better fifty years of progress than a cycle of stagnation.

"Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us  
range,  
Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves of  
change."

In the early part of the Victorian period many thought that science was to lead them into the land of promise: in the latter part many saw sadly that the world was still in the land of bondage. In *Locksley Hall Sixty*

*Years After*, written toward the close of his life, Tennyson expressed the feeling of the later period, — the sense of the inadequacy of modern science, which we have already found in the works of Ruskin and Carlyle. The cry of "Forward" is heard no longer; the inventions of science have not, after all, redeemed the world:

"Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space  
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest common-  
place!"

But Tennyson is not merely the poet of scientific invention, in its promise or in its disappointments; he is the poet of science in a far deeper sense. He absorbed the theories and the spirit of modern science, and made them the basis of much of his work. Yet his point of view is not purely scientific, for he interpreted the new scientific ideas in his own way, often finding in them a deeper spiritual meaning. The theory of *evolution*, for example, appealed to him very deeply and became a leading feature of his teachings. But it was the broad spiritual application of this theory which interested him. Evolution, or the development of life from the lower to the higher, suggested to him the eternal purpose of God in his creation; it revealed life to him as a slow progress toward perfection. So the youthful cry of "Forward" gains a deeper meaning, and Tennyson sees:

"One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves."

Thus Byron's rebellious clamor for liberty, Shelley's noble "passion for reforming the world" by some sudden and unaccountable conversion of humanity, were

succeeded by Tennyson's belief that the race is slowly moving upward, and that all which is low and brutal in man is to be brought at last under the mastery of the spirit. This painful but certain progress of the race is the underlying theme of the *Idylls of the King*. Taken as a whole, these *Idylls* show us the struggle between the lower and the higher elements in man, — between body and spirit, the senses and the soul. The higher elements are not always victorious: the progress of the world, while certain, is not uninterrupted. King Arthur tries to set up his ideal Kingdom, to reform the world at a stroke, as Shelley would have done, and apparently fails. But his failure is only apparent. He is disheartened only because he has been too impatient and has not seen to the end. Arthur will come again, and as he departs, the King himself declares, "I pass but shall not die."

Finally, Tennyson is not only the poet of modern science and modern progress; he is the poet of that conflict between doubt and faith which stirred the men of his generation. Up to a certain point he followed science; but he felt that science alone could not meet the deepest needs of the soul. To Tennyson, the unseen, or spiritual, world was more real than the world which we call physical. He appreciated with the scientist the laws which govern the physical world, — the world we can see, and feel, and touch, yet to him the "true world" was the world of spirit:

" . . . Within the world we see  
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore."

To him, as to Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Ruskin, Nature was but the manifestation of that Spirit which fills and sustains it:

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains —  
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?"

**Conclusion.** — Thus in Wordsworth and Carlyle, in Browning and in Tennyson, we find that deep religious earnestness, that astounding force, which we noted in those obscure English tribes who nearly fifteen centuries ago began to possess themselves of the Island of Britain. It is, indeed, this sound and vigorous character of the English race, underlying all the long centuries of its literary history, which gives a profound unity to all it has created. Browning's *Prospice*, that dauntless challenge to death from one who "was ever a fighter," repeats, in its cadence and spirit, poetry that comes to us from the dimly seen and far-off childhood of our race. If in the nineteenth century we have bartered and sold, and offered sacrifice to the Britannia of the market-place, it is still true that the problems of existence have never been dwelt on with more earnestness, that the greatest voices of the literature have called us with a new ardor to the eternal and the unseen. Henry Morley reminds us that the opening lines of Cædmon's *Creation*, the first words of English literature on English soil, are words of praise to the Almighty Maker of all things. After reviewing in outline the long and splendid history of the literature thus solemnly begun, we find in the two greatest poet-voices of our own day, Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning, the note of an invincible faith, an undiminished hope; we find them affirming, in the historic spirit of the English race,

"Thy soul and God stand sure."



## IMPORTANT DATES

## HISTORICAL.

GEORGE IV .....	1820-1830
WILLIAM IV .....	1830-1837
Opening of Manchester and Liverpool Railroad .....	1830
Passage of Parliamentary Reform Bill .....	1832
Abolition of Slavery .....	1833
VICTORIA .....	1837-1901
First electric telegraph in operation .....	1837
Steam communication established with United States....	1840
Sub-marine cable between England and America.....	1866
Chartist Riots .....	1842
Crystal Palace Exhibition.....	1851
Duty on newspapers abolished .....	1855
Crimean War .....	1854-1856
Indian Mutiny .....	1857
Canadian Provinces united as Dominion of Canada ....	1867
Second Parliamentary Reform Bill .....	1867
Victoria, Empress of India .....	1876
Third Parliamentary Reform Bill .....	1885
Settlement and growth of Australia .....	about 1788-1901
Commonwealth of Australia established .....	1901
Boer War in South Africa.....	1899-1902

## LITERARY.

Prose-writers (historians, essayists, etc.).

THOMAS CARLYLE .....	1795-1881
Period of literary activity .....	about 1824-1881
THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY .....	1800-1859
Period of literary activity .....	about 1825-1859
JOHN HENRY NEWMAN .....	1801-1890
<i>Apologia Pro Vita Sua</i> .....	1864
JOHN RUSKIN .....	1819-1900
<i>Modern Painters</i> .....	1843-1860
<i>Unto This Last</i> .....	1862
MATTHEW ARNOLD .....	1822-1888
<i>On Translating Homer</i> .....	1861
(Other prose-writers: JAMES A. FROUDE, E. A. FREEMAN, FREDERIC HARRISON, LESLIE STEPHEN, J. R. GREEN, WALTER H. PATER, J. A. SYMONDS, etc.)	

NOVELISTS.

- WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY .....1811-1863  
*Vanity Fair* ..... 1847  
*Henry Esmond* ..... 1852  
CHARLES DICKENS.....1812-1870  
Period of literary activity .....about 1834-1870  
GEORGE ELIOT .....1820-1881  
*Scenes of Clerical Life* ..... 1858  
*Daniel Deronda* ..... 1876  
GEORGE MEREDITH .....1828-1909  
THOMAS HARDY .....born 1840  
(Other novelists and story-writers: CHARLES READE; ANTHONY TROLLOPE; CHARLOTTE, EMILY, and ANNE BRONTË; CHARLES KINGSLEY, WILKIE COLLINS, R. L. STEVENSON, RUDYARD KIPLING, etc.).

POETS.

- ALFRED TENNYSON .....1809-1892  
Period of literary activity .....about 1830-1892  
ROBERT BROWNING .....1812-1889  
Period of literary activity .....about 1833-1889  
RISE OF PRE-RAPHAELITE SCHOOL OF POETRY AND  
PAINTING ..... about 1848  
Prominent in this movement were DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828-1882) and WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-1896).  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE .....1837-1909  
*Atalanta in Calydon* ..... 1864  
*Poems and Ballads* ..... 1866  
(Other poets of the period: EDWARD FITZGERALD (*Omar Khayyám*, 1859), MATTHEW ARNOLD, COVENTRY PATMORE, GEORGE MEREDITH, JAMES THOMSON, ALFRED AUSTIN, AUSTIN DOBSON, WILLIAM WATSON, RUDYARD KIPLING, etc.)

SCIENCE.

- SIR CHARLES LYELL's *Principles of Geology* ..... 1830  
British Association for the Advancement of Science  
founded ..... 1831  
CHARLES DARWIN .....1809-1882  
*Origin of Species* ..... 1859  
HERBERT SPENCER .....1820-1903  
THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY .....1825-1895

## FOREIGN DATES

Revolution in France. Fall of Charles X .....	1830
Revolution in France. Abdication of Louis Philippe.....	1848
Italy united under King Victor Emanuel .....	1861
Civil War in United States.....	1861-1865
France becomes a Republic .....	1871



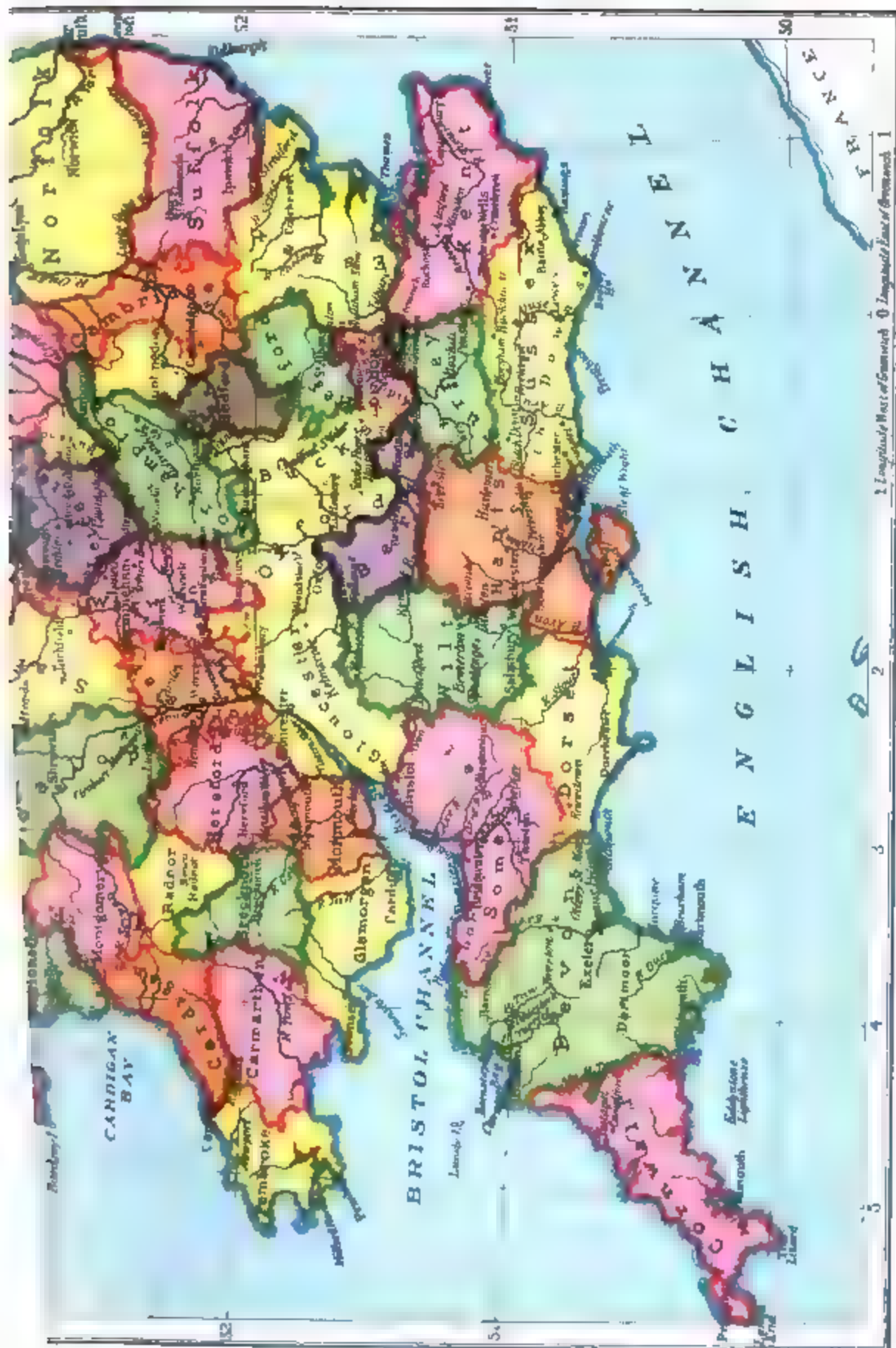
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## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

As supplementary to the historical and biographical study of English literature as outlined in the text, the student will find it valuable to have as a background a further knowledge of the history of England, including the manners and customs in various periods; of the history of the changes and developments of the English language; and of the fundamental principles of English versification. He will be helped also by a study of the geography of the British Isles, and by a knowledge of English country-life and town-life, and of the literary landmarks of London, Edinburgh, etc. Only a few books, of general information, can be mentioned here:

I. For the political and social history of England: Green's *History of the English People*, 4 vols. (Harper), or his *Short History of the English People*, 1 vol. (Harper); S. R. Gardiner's *Student's History of England* (Longmans); Cheyney's *A Short History of England* (Ginn); Traill's *Social England*, 6 vols. (Putnam), in the illustrated edition, is particularly valuable and interesting for the light it throws on social conditions, and for its numerous excellent illustrations.

II. For the history of the English language: Emerson's *Short History of the English Language* (Macmillan); Lounsbury's *History of the English Language* (Holt).

III. For the principles of English versification, and the kinds and forms of English poetry: Parson's *English Versification* (Leach); Corson's *Primer of English Verse* (Ginn); Alden's *English Verse* (Holt); Gummere, *Handbook of Poetics* (Ginn).

IV. For the geography of the British Isles, literary landmarks, etc., Baedeker's *Great Britain and London*; Howitt's *Homes and Haunts of the British Poets* (Routledge); Hutton's *Literary Landmarks of London* and *Literary Landmarks of Edinburgh* (Harper).



V. The student may be referred also to several standard general histories of English literature: Taine's *History of English Literature* (abridged), 1 vol. (Holt); Jusserand's *Literary History of the English People*, 2 vols. (Putnam); Chamber's *Cyclopedia of English Literature*, 3 vols. (Lippincott).

For the literature before the Conquest, the following books are helpful: Ten Brink's *Early English Literature* (Holt); Brooke's *History of Early English Literature* (Macmillan); Lewis' *The Beginnings of English Literature* (Ginn).

For the literature from the Conquest to Chaucer: Schofield's *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* (Macmillan); Snell's *The Age of Chaucer* (Bell).

Ryland's *Chronological Outlines of English Literature* (Macmillan) is a valuable table of authors, works, and events, arranged year by year.

VI. General collections of standard English poetry and prose will be found convenient when access to a large library is difficult: A. POETRY: Manly's *English Poetry, 1170-1892* (Ginn); *The Oxford Book of Verse, 1250-1900* (Clarendon Press); Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, series 1 and 2 (Macmillan); Pancoast's *Standard English Poems* (Holt); Ward's *English Poets* (Macmillan); Hale's *Longer English Poems* (Macmillan). B. PROSE: Craik's *Selections from English Prose*, 5 vols. (Macmillan); Pancoast's *Standard English Prose* (Holt); Manly's *English Prose, 1137-1900* (Ginn.)

VII. Convenient school editions of standard works and selections will be found listed in the catalogues of the various publishers. Prominent among these series are *The Riverside Literature Series* (Houghton); *English Readings Series* (Holt); *Everyman's Library* (Dent); The Scott Library, Camelot Series (Scott); *Golden Treasury Series*, *Temple Classics*, *Temple Dramatists* (Macmillan); *Gateway Series* (American Book Co.); *Standard English Classics*, *Athenæum Press Series* (Ginn); *Belles Lettres Series*, *Heath's English Classics* (Heath); *Pocket English Classics*, *Highways and Byways Series* (Macmillan); *The Clarendon Press Series* (Oxford).

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL REFERENCES  
AND SUGGESTED READINGS

(Note: E. M. L.—*English Men of Letters' Series*; G. W. S.—*Great Writers' Series*.)

**Celtic or British Literature.** — The student will get considerable knowledge of the spirit of the Celtic genius and of its contribution to English literature, as well as of the materials of Celtic romance, by readings from the following works: Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances* (Longmans); Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion* (Dent); Lady Gregory's translation of *Gods and Fighting Men* (Scribner). Aubrey de Vere's poems, "The Children of Lir," "Cuchullin," etc., are based on old Irish poems. See also Arnold's essay on "Celtic Literature" (Macmillan).

**Old English Literature** (before the Norman Conquest). — Cook and Tinker's *Select Translations from Old English Poetry* (Ginn). Among the many translations of *Beowulf* may be mentioned the prose translation by C. G. Child (Houghton), and the verse translation by Gummere, *The Oldest English Epic* (Macmillan). Various translations of other Old English poems may be found in vol. II of Morley's *English Writers*, and in Brooke's *Early English Literature* (Macmillan).

**Chaucer.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: A. W. Ward, *Chaucer* (E. M. L.); Root, *Poetry of Chaucer* (Houghton); Pollard, *Chaucer in English Literature Primers* (Macmillan); Lowell's essay on "Chaucer," in *My Study Windows* (Houghton).

**READINGS:** Every student should be familiar with the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*. Other works giving a knowledge of Chaucer's breadth and variety are: "Knight's Tale," "Clerk's Tale," "Man of Lawe's Tale," "Nonne Preste's Tale," "The Pardoner's Tale," Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas," "The Prioresses' Tale," "Ballad of Good Counsel," "Complaint to his Empty Purse."

**Ballads.** — Convenient collections of the old ballads will be found in *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. I, ed. by Kittredge (Houghton); Gummere, *Old English Ballads* (Ginn);

J. P. Kinard, *Old English Ballads* (Silver, Burdett & Co.). The student will be most interested in the ballads: *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, *Robin Hood and the Monk*, *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Johnie Armstrong*, *The Twa Corbies*, *Fair Margaret and Sweet William*, and *The Nut Brown Maid*. In addition to these, it will be well to study some of the modern imitations or adaptations of the old ballad forms in such poems as Goldsmith's *The Hermit*, Sir Walter Scott's *The Eve of St. John*, *Red Harlaw*, and *The Wild Huntsman*. Many other ballads of later times will readily suggest themselves.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is interesting not only in itself but as a source from which many later writers have derived materials for romance. The editions best adapted to the student's use are: *Selections*, W. E. Mead (Ginn); *Morte d'Arthur*, ed. by E. Rhys, in Camelot Series (Walter Scott). In the original form Malory is somewhat difficult reading for the young student. Many of the same stories have been retold in simpler form by Howard Pyle in *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table*, *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights*, and *The Story of Sir Launcelot and His Companions* (Scribner).

Spenser. — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Church, *Life of Spenser* (E. M. L.); Lowell's essay on "Spenser" in *Among My Books* (Houghton); Dowden, "Spenser the Poet and Teacher" and "The Heroines of Spenser" in *Transcripts and Studies* (Scribner).

READINGS: "February," in *The Shepherd's Calendar*; *Prothalamion*; and the selections from the *Faërie Queene* in Pancoast's *Standard English Poems* or in Manly's *English Poetry*.

Shakespeare. — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Dowden, *Shakspeare Primer* (American Book Co.); Walter Raleigh, *William Shakespeare* (E. M. L.); Sidney Lee, *Life of Shakespeare* (Macmillan); Dowden, *Shakspeare: His Mind and Art* (Harper).

READINGS: *Midsummer Night's Dream* (early comedy); *Merchant of Venice* (middle comedy); *King Henry V.* (history and comedy); *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* (later comedies); *Julius Caesar* (history and tragedy); *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Mac-*

*beth* (the great tragedies); *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale* (romances). For selections from the *Sonnets*, see Pancoast's *Standard English Poems*.

**Bacon.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Church, *Life of Bacon* (E. M. L.); Macaulay's essay on "Bacon," in *Essays*, vol. II (Harper).

READINGS: Among the numerous cheap and convenient editions of the *Essays*, Reynolds' edition (Clarendon Press) and Abbot's edition (Longmans) may be mentioned.

**Milton.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Stopford Brooke's *Milton*, in Student's Literary Series (Appleton); Garnett, *Milton*, (in G. W. S.); Raleigh's *Milton* (Putnam); Lowell's essay on "Milton," in *Among My Books*, vol. II (Houghton).

READINGS: For Milton's minor poems see C. G. Child's *Milton's Shorter Poems* (Scribner). The student should begin the study of Milton with these shorter poems, especially with *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and some of the sonnets, such as *On the Completion of his Twenty Third Year* and *On his Blindness*. For Milton's prose writings see *Selected Prose Writings* (Appleton). *Paradise Lost*, Books I, and II, ed. by Cook (Leach).

**Dryden.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Saintsbury, *Life of Dryden* (E. M. L.); Macaulay's essay on "Dryden," in *Essays*, vol. I; Lowell, "Dryden," in *Among my Books* (Houghton).

READINGS: "Absalom and Achitophel," Part I; "MacFlecknoe," "Under Mr. Milton's Picture," "Ode to the Memory of Mistress Ann Killigrew," "Alexander's Feast," "Song for Saint Cecilia's Day." It will be found interesting and profitable to compare Dryden's modernized version of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" (Palamon and Arcite) with the original, and analyze the respective merits of the two poetic styles. PROSE: selections in Pancoast's *Standard English Prose* (Holt).

**Pope.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Leslie Stephen, *Alexander Pope* (E. M. L.); De Quincey, in *Biographical Essays* and also in *Essays on the Poets*. Lowell's "Pope," in *My Study Windows* (Houghton).

READINGS: "Spring" in *Pastorals*; *Windsor Forest*; *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*; *The Rape of the Lock*;

*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot; The Universal Prayer; Ode on Solitude; Moral Essays, I.*

**Steele.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Dobson, *Richard Steele* (Longmans); Thackeray, in the *English Humourists* (Holt).

READINGS: *Selections from Steele*, being papers from the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*, ed. by Dobson (Clarendon Press); *Selections*, ed. by G. R. Carpenter (Ginn).

**Addison.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Courthope, *Addison* (E. M. L.); Thackeray, in the *English Humourists* (Holt.)

READINGS: *Essays*, chosen and edited by J. R. Green (Macmillan); *Selections from Addison's Papers in the Spectator*, ed. by Arnold (Clarendon Press); *Select Essays of Addison*, with Macaulay's essay on *Addison*, ed. by Thurber (Allyn and Bacon); *Roger De Coverley Papers*, ed. by Winchester (American Book Co.). The student will find it interesting to compare these papers with the character studies in Overbury's "Characters," in his *Works* (Library of Old Authors, Scribner).

**Defoe.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Minto, *Defoe* (E. M. L.). Leslie Stephen, "Defoe's Novels," in *Hours in a Library*, vol. I (Putnam).

READINGS: *Journal of the Plague Year* (Temple Classics); *Robinson Crusoe* (Everyman's Library); *Essay on Projects* (Cassell's National Library); *Apparition of Mrs. Veal*, in Pancoast's *Standard English Prose* (Holt); Defoe's *Minor Novels*, ed. by Saintsbury (Macmillan).

**Swift.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Leslie Stephen, *Swift* (E. M. L.); Thackeray, in the *English Humourists* (Holt).

READINGS: *Gulliver's Travels* (Ginn); selections in Pancoast's *English Prose* (Holt).

**Johnson.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Every student should be familiar, at least in part, with Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Other shorter biographies are, Leslie Stephen's *Johnson* (E. M. L.), and Macaulay's *Life* (1856) in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ninth ed. See also Carlyle's "Samuel Johnson," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*.

READINGS: Lives of "Pope," "Gray," and "Collins," in the *Lives of the Poets*, ed. by Hill (Clarendon Press), or in the Bohn

edition. See also *Selections*, ed. by Osgood (Holt). POETRY: "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes," in Hale's *Longer English Poems* (Macmillan).

**Collins.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Johnson, in *Lives of the Poets* (Clarendon Press); Swinburne, in *Miscellanies* (Scribner).

READINGS: Odes, *To Fear, To Simplicity, To Evening, To Peace, The Passions, On the Death of Thomson, On the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland; Dirge in Cymbeline*, — in *Poems*, with memoir, ed. by Thomas (Aldine Poets).

**Gray.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Johnson, in *Lives of the Poets* (Clarendon Press); Lowell, in *Latest Literary Essays* (Houghton); Matthew Arnold, in *Essays in Criticism*, 2d series (Macmillan).

READINGS: *Elegy in a Country Churchyard; Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College; On the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes; The Bard; Ode for Music; The Fatal Sisters, an Ode, from the Norse Tongue.*

**Goldsmith.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Forster, *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, 2 vols. (Chapman and H.); W. Irving, *Life* (Putnam); De Quincey, in *Essays on the Poets*; Thackeray, in the *English Humourists* (Holt); Howitt, in *Homes and Haunts of the British Poets* (Routledge).

READINGS: The most convenient good edition of Goldsmith's works is the Globe edition, in one volume, ed. by Masson (Macmillan). The student should know *The Deserted Village, The Traveller, The Vicar of Wakefield*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*. A book of *Selections from Goldsmith* has been edited by Dobson (Clarendon Press).

**Burke.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Morley, *Life* (E. M. L.); Morley, *Edmund Burke; an Historical Study* (Macmillan); Woodrow Wilson, "The Interpreter of English Liberty" in *Mere Literature* (Houghton).

READINGS: in *Selections from Burke*, ed. by Perry (Holt); *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful* (Temple Classics); *American Speeches and Letters on the Irish Question* (Morley's Universal Library); *Letter to a Noble Lord*, ed. by Smyth (Ginn).

**Cowper.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Southey, *Life*, 2 vols.

(Bohn); Benham, "Memoirs," in Globe edition of *Works* (Macmillan); Leslie Stephen, "Cowper and Rousseau" in *Hours in a Library* vol. III (Putnam); Bagehot, "William Cowper" in *Literary Studies*, vol. I (Longmans).

**READINGS:** Cowper's works will be found to repay close and repeated reading, both for their intrinsic merits and for their intimate relations to the literary and general history of the time. The student should be familiar with the *Letters* (ed. by Benham, Macmillan), which can hardly be overpraised, and with *The Task*. He should know also the best of the shorter poems, such as *Lines on the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, *The Loss of the Royal George*, *The Castaway*, *John Gilpin*, etc.

**Burns.** — **BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM:** Shairp, *Burns* (E. M. L.); Blackie, *Life* (G. W. S.); Carlyle, "Burns," in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, and "Burns, The Hero as Man of Letters," in *Heroes and Hero Worship*. A convenient edition containing both essays is in Longmans' English Classics. Stevenson, "Some Aspects of Robert Burns," in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (Scribner); Henley, "Life, Genius, and Achievement," essay in his edition of the *Works* (Houghton).

**READINGS:** The following brief list contains only a few of Burns' more notable and familiar poems. It is intended only as an introduction to more extended study.

I. *Songs*: "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," "John Anderson, My Jo," "To Mary in Heaven," "Highland Mary," "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon," "Flow Gently Sweet Afton," "O, My Luve's like a Red, Red Rose," "Scots Wha Hae wi' Wallace Bled," "Is There for Honest Poverty," "Macpherson's Farewell," "Auld Lang Syne," "For a' that and a' that."

II. *Sympathy with Nature and Animals*: "To a Mountain Daisy," "To a Mouse on Turning up her Nest with a Plough," "On Scaring some Water-fowl in Loch Turit," "On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp by Me."

III. "Address to the Deil," "Address to the Unco' Guid."

IV. "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "Tam o' Shanter," "The Twa Dogs," "The Brigs of Ayr."

**Wordsworth.** — **BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM:** Myers, *Life*

(E. M. L.); Hazlitt, "On Wordsworth," in *Lectures on the English Poets* (Dodd); Bagehot, "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning," in *Literary Studies*, vol. II (Longmans); Lowell, "Wordsworth," in *Among My Books*, vol. II (Houghton); Arnold, "Wordsworth," in *Essays in Criticism*, 2d series (Macmillan); Swinburne, "Wordsworth and Byron," in *Miscellanies* (Scribner).

READINGS: The best edition of Wordsworth's works is that by Knight, in 12 volumes (Macmillan); a good single volume edition is the Globe edition (Macmillan). A representative selection of poems for class reading is to be found in the Riverside Literature Series (Houghton).

"My Heart Leaps Up," "The Daffodils," "Three Years She Grew," "The Reverie of Poor Susan," "To the Cuckoo," "Lines on Revisiting Tintern Abbey," "Laodamia," "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," "Ode to Duty." *Sonnets*: "The World is Too Much With Us," "Milton," "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," "King's College Chapel" (three sonnets), "When I Have Borne in Memory What Has Tamed." *Lyrical*: "The Solitary Reaper," "The Primrose of the Rock," "The Grave of Burns," "She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways," "She was a Phantom of Delight," "The Affliction of Margaret." *Narrative*: "Hart-leap Well," "Ruth," "Michael," "The Brothers," "Rob Roy's Grave."

**Coleridge.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Campbell, *Life* (Macmillan); Shairp, "Coleridge as Poet and Philosopher," in *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, 2d edition (Houghton); Dowden, in *New Studies in Literature* (Scribner); Hazlitt, in *The Spirit of the Age* (Dodd).

READINGS: "The Ancient Mariner," "Christabel," "Kubla Khan," "Destruction of the Bastile," "France, an Ode," "Youth and Age," "Complaint and Reply," "Work Without Hope," "Dejection, an Ode." For Coleridge's prose, see *Selections from Prose Writings*, ed. by Beers (Holt).

**Scott.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: A knowledge of Lockhart's *Life of Scott* (which, with Boswell's *Johnson*, holds a foremost place in English biography) is indispensable. A good short



biography is Saintsbury's *Life* (Scribner). For criticism, Hazlitt, in *The Spirit of the Age* (Dodd); Carlyle, in *Miscellaneous Essays* (Scribner); Shairp, "Homeric Spirit in Walter Scott," in *Aspects of Poetry* (Houghton); Lang, in his Introduction to *Lyrics and Ballads of Sir Walter Scott* (Scribner); Bagehot, "The Waverley Novels," in *Literary Studies*, vol. II (Longmans); Masson, in *British Novelists and Their Style* (Lothrop).

READINGS: *Poetry*: "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," "Rokeby," "The Eve of St. John." Many of Scott's shorter poems are scattered through *Rokeby*, the novels, etc. With the best of these the student should be familiar. See the Globe edition of the *Poems* (Macmillan). *Novels*: *The Antiquary*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Talisman*, *Quentin Durward*, *Guy Mannering*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*. For a knowledge of Scott the man, the student should read his *Journal*.

**Lamb.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Ainger, *Lamb* (E. M. L.); Lucas, *Life*, 2 vols. (Putnam). The personality of Charles Lamb is one of the most interesting and most lovable in the history of English letters, and therefore the memoirs and recollections of his contemporaries are of particular value: see Talfourd, *Memoirs of Charles Lamb* (Gibbings); Hazlitt, *The Lambs* (Scribner); Proctor (Barry Cornwall), *Charles Lamb* (Little); De Quincey, "Recollections," and "C. Lamb," in his *Works*, ed. by Masson, vols. III and V (Black). For criticism, see Swinburne in *Miscellanies* (Scribner); Pater, *Appreciations* (Macmillan).

READINGS: In *Essays of Elia*: "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago," "The Two Races of Men," "The Old and New Schoolmaster," "Valentine's Day," "Modern Gallantry," "Dream Children, a Reverie," "New Year's Eve," "The Superannuated Man," "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig," "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behavior of Married People." The student should know the *Tales from Shakespeare*, by Charles and Mary Lamb.

**De Quincey.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Masson, *Life* (E. M. L.); Findlay, *Personal Recollections of De Quincey* (A. and C. Black); Leslie Stephen, in *Hours in a Library*, vol. I

(Putnam); Saintsbury, in *Essays in English Literature*, 1780–1860 (Scribner); Burton, "The Vision of a Mighty Book Hunter," in *The Book Hunter* (Lippincott).

READINGS: *Joan of Arc* and *English Mail Coach*, ed. by J. M. Hart (Holt); *Flight of a Tartar Tribe*, ed. by C. S. Baldwin (Longmans); *Selections*, ed. by Bliss Perry (Doubleday). These selections form an admirable introduction to the more extended study of De Quincey's work. Mention must be made, moreover, of the papers on *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, remarkable not only for their irony, but also for their narrative passages. A most charming example of De Quincey's humor will be found in the third chapter of his *Autobiographic Sketches*, of particular interest to boys.

**Byron.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Nichol, *Life* (E. M. L.); Trelawney, *Recollections of Shelley and Byron* (Frowde); Macaulay, in *Essays*, vol. I (Longmans); Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 2d series (Macmillan); Woodberry, "The Byron Centenary," in *Makers of Literature* (Macmillan).

READINGS: "The Prisoner of Chillon," "There's not a Joy the World Can Give," "Childe Harold" (Cantos III and IV), "Lines on Completing His Thirty-sixth Year," "She Walks in Beauty Like the Night," "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." Byron is a poet of brilliant passages. With some of these the student should be familiar; he should know such passages as "He who hath bent him o'er the dead," from *The Giaour*; "'Tis midnight; on the mountains brown," in *The Siege of Corinth*; the address to the Ocean and the Eve of Waterloo in *Childe Harold*; and "The Isles of Greece" from *Don Juan*. Several of these selections will be found in Ward's *English Poets* (Macmillan) and in Pancoast's *Standard English Poems* (Holt).

**Shelley.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Dowden, *Life* (Scribner); Symonds, *Life* (E. M. L.); Bagehot, in *Literary Studies*, vol. I (Longmans); Masson, in *Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats* (Macmillan); Shairp, "Shelley as a Lyric Poet," in *Aspects of Poetry* (Houghton).

READINGS: "To a Skylark," "The Cloud," "Ode to the West Wind," "Arethusa," "The Indian Serenade," "Lines written

among the Euganean Hills," "Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples," "Mont Blanc," "Mutability," "A Lament," "Adonais," "Alastor," "Prometheus Unbound." In studying Shelley as a lyric poet the reader should turn to the choruses in "Prometheus Unbound" and "Hellas." Note particularly the "Life of Life, thy Lips Enkindle," from the former, and the last chorus from the latter of these two poems.

**Keats.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Colvin, *Life* (E. M. L.); Masson, in *Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats* (Macmillan); Lowell, in *Among My Books*, 2d series (Houghton); Arnold, in *Essays in Criticism*, 2d series (Macmillan).

READINGS: *Romantic and Medieval*: "The Eve of St. Agnes," "The Eve of St. Mark," "La Belle Dame Sans Merci." *Classical Poems*: "Lamia," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Hyperion." *Personal poems, Odes, Sonnets, etc.*: "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode to Autumn," "Ode on Melancholy." *Sonnets*: "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," "Keen, Fitful Gusts are Whispering Here and There," "On the Sea," "Bright Star, Would I Were Steadfast as Thou Art" (Keats' last sonnet).

**Macaulay.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Trevelyan, *Life and Letters*, 2 vols. (Harper), is the standard life. Bagehot, essay on "Macaulay," in *Literary Studies*, vol. II (Longmans); Arnold, "Macaulay," in *Mixed Essays* (Macmillan); F. Harrison, "Lord Macaulay," in *Studies in Early Victorian Writers* (Lane); Leslie Stephen, "Macaulay," in *Hours in a Library*, vol. III (Putnam).

READINGS: *Verse*: "Ivry," "Lays of Ancient Rome," "The Battle of Naseby." *Biographical and Critical Essays*: "Addison," "Milton," "Bunyan," "Johnson," "History." These essays and Macaulay's poetry will be found in *Miscellaneous Works*, 5 vols., ed. by Lady Trevelyan (Harper). An example of Macaulay's art as an historian is to be found in chapter III, volume I, of the *History of England*, "The State of England in 1685."

**Carlyle.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Froude, *Thomas Carlyle*, 4 vols. (Harper); Nichol, *Life* (E. M. L.); Shairp, "Prose Poets," in *Aspects of Poetry* (Houghton); Birrell, "Carlyle," in *Obiter Dicta*, vol. I (Scribner); Frederick Har-

ri-son, "Thomas Carlyle," in *Studies in Early Victorian Writers* (Lane).

READINGS: Among the most notable and representative of Carlyle's shorter works are: *Sartor Resartus*, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, *Past and Present*, the Inaugural address at Edinburgh *On the Choice of Books*, and the essays on *Burns*, *Johnson*, and *Richter*. Every student should know *Sartor Resartus*, one of the great books of the century. If it is not read for school work, it should be noted as a book for future mastery.

Ruskin. — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: John Ruskin, *Præterita*, *Scenes and Thoughts of My Past Life* (Wiley Sons); Frederick Harrison, *Life* (E. M. L.); also "Ruskin as a Master of Prose," "Ruskin as a Prophet," "Ruskin's Eightieth Birthday," in Harrison's *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill* (Macmillan).

READINGS: See an admirable selection of writings from Ruskin in Vida D. Scudder's *Introduction to the Study of John Ruskin* (Sibley); *The Crown of Wild Olive*, *Unto This Last*, *Fors Clavigera*, Letters V and VIII; *Modern Painters*, Part VI, chapters I and IX, "The Earth Veil" and "The Leaf Shadows."

Arnold. — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Russell, *Life* ("Literary Lives," Scribner); Hutton, (a) "Poetry of Matthew Arnold," in *Essays, Theological and Literary*, vol. II (Macmillan); (b) "Arnold," in *Modern Guides of English Thought* (Macmillan); Woodberry, in *Makers of Literature* (Macmillan); Harrison in *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill, and Other Essays* (Macmillan).

READINGS: *Poetry*, "Switzerland," "Isolation," "To Marguerite," "Absence," "Dover Beach," "Self-Dependence," "The Buried Life," "Calais Sands," "Faded Leaves," "The Scholar-Gypsy," "Thyrsis," "Tristram and Iseult," "Sohrab and Rustum," "The Forsaken Merman," "Geist's Grave." *Sonnets*: "Shakespeare," "The Good Shepherd with the Kid," "East London." *Prose*: "The Study of Poetry," "Milton," in *Essays in Criticism*, 2d series (Macmillan); "Numbers," "Emerson," in *Discourses in America*. Extracts from Arnold's prose, with admirable introduction, are given in E. T. McLaughlin's *Literary Criticism* (Holt). See also *Selections*, ed. by L. E. Gates (Holt).

**THE NOVELISTS.** — It is impossible in any short space to give a satisfactory list of references or readings for the many important writers of fiction in the nineteenth century. It may be helpful, however, to mention a few standard biographies and criticisms of the three or four greatest novelists in the Victorian period:

**Dickens.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Forster, *Life*, 2 vols. (Scribner); Chesterton, *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (Dodd); Mamie Dickens, *My Father as I Recall Him* (Dutton); Pierce and Wheeler, *The Dickens Dictionary* (Houghton); Gissing, *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (Dodd); Harrison, in *Studies in Early Victorian Literature* (Lane); Lilly, in *Four English Humourists of the Nineteenth Century* (Murray).

**Thackeray.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Merivale and Marzials, *Life* (G. W. S.); Melville, *Life*, 2 vols. (Stone); Lilly, in *Four English Humourists of the Nineteenth Century* (Murray); Harrison, in *Studies in Early Victorian Literature* (Lane); Wilson, *Thackeray in the United States* (Dodd).

**Eliot.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Leslie Stephen, *Life* (E. M. L.); Cooke, *George Eliot: a Critical Study of Her Life and Writings* (Houghton); Parkinson, *Scenes from the George Eliot Country* (Simpkin); Dowden, "George Eliot," "Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda," in *Studies in Literature* (Scribner).

**Stevenson.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Balfour, *Life*, 2 vols. (Scribner); Raleigh, *Life* (Lane); *Letters to His Family and Friends*, ed. by Colvin, 2 vols. (Scribner); Japp, *Robert Louis Stevenson; a Record, an Estimate, and a Memorial* (Scribner); Genung, *Stevenson's Attitude to Life* (Crowell).

**READINGS:** *Novels:* *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *David Balfour*, *The Master of Ballantrae*. *Essays and Sketches:* "On Walking Tours," in *Virginibus Puerisque*; "The Lantern Bearers," in *Across the Plains*; *Travels with a Donkey*; *An Inland Voyage*; "On Style in Literature," "Books which Have Influenced Me," in *Essays and Reviews*. *Poems:* *A Child's Garden of Verse*, *Underwoods* (especially "Requiem," and "The Celestial Surgeon").

**Kipling.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Knowles, *Kipling Primer* (Brown); Richard Le Gallienne, *Rudyard Kipling, a Criticism* (John Lane).

READINGS: *Verse*: "The Ballad of East and West," "Danny Deever," "Fuzzy-Wuzzy," "Mandalay," "Recessional," "The Young Queen," "Our Lady of the Snows." *Short Stories*: "Without Benefit of Clergy," in *Mine Own People*; "William the Conqueror," "The Brushwood Boy," "A Walking Delegate," in *The Day's Work*; *Kim*; *Captains Courageous*.

**Tennyson.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: *Memoir by his Son* (Macmillan); Waugh, *Study of Life and Work* (Macmillan); Luce, *Tennyson Primer* ("Temple Primers"); Dowden, "Tennyson and Browning," in *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (Scribner); for advanced students, Masterman, *Tennyson as a Religious Teacher* (Knight and Millet).

READINGS: "Mariana," "The Brook," "The Lotos Eaters," "Ulysses," "Ænone." Among Tennyson's patriotic poems may be mentioned "The Charge of the Light Brigade," "The Defense of Lucknow," "The Revenge," "The Third of February, 1852." For Tennyson's theory of art, see "The Palace of Art." Among the Arthurian poems, the student should know, beside the *Idylls of the King*, "The Lady of Shalott," "Sir Galahad," "Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere." The following *Idylls* are suggested if the entire series is not read, "Dedication," "The Coming of Arthur," "Gareth and Lynette," "The Holy Grail," "Guinevere," "The Passing of Arthur," "Epilogue." For Tennyson's youthful and maturer feeling toward contemporary problems, compare "Locksley Hall" with "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." For Tennyson's faith, the introduction to "In Memoriam," "The Higher Pantheism," "Crossing the Bar."

**Browning.** — BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM: Sharp, *Life* (G. W. S.); Cooke, *Guidebook to Browning* (Houghton); Symons, *Introduction to the Study of Browning* (Cassell); Dowden, "Tennyson and Browning," in *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (Scribner).

READINGS: The student should begin the study of Browning by reading the shorter poems such as the *Dramatic Lyrics*. Especially among these he should know "Cavalier Tunes," "The

Lost Leader," "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," "Evelyn Hope," "Old Pictures in Florence." Beside these the student should read "Andrea del Sarto," "An Incident of the French Camp," "Hervé Riel," "My Last Duchess," "In a Gondola," "The Last Ride Together," "The Pied Piper of Hamelin: a Child's Story." Dramas: "In a Balcony," "Pippa Passes."

For more detailed bibliographies, tables, references, and suggestions, see Pancoast's *Study Lists, Tables and Maps* (Holt).

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